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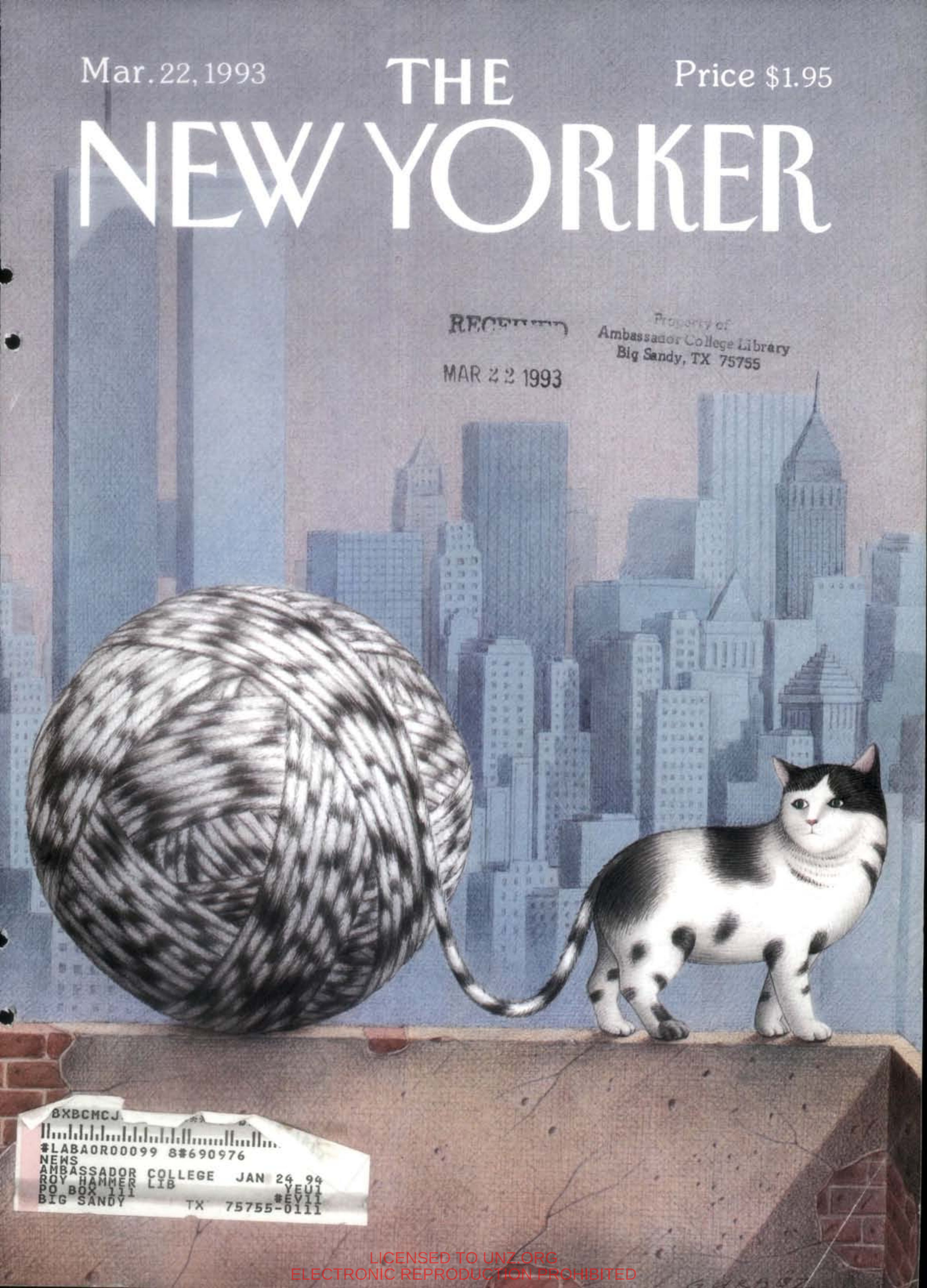

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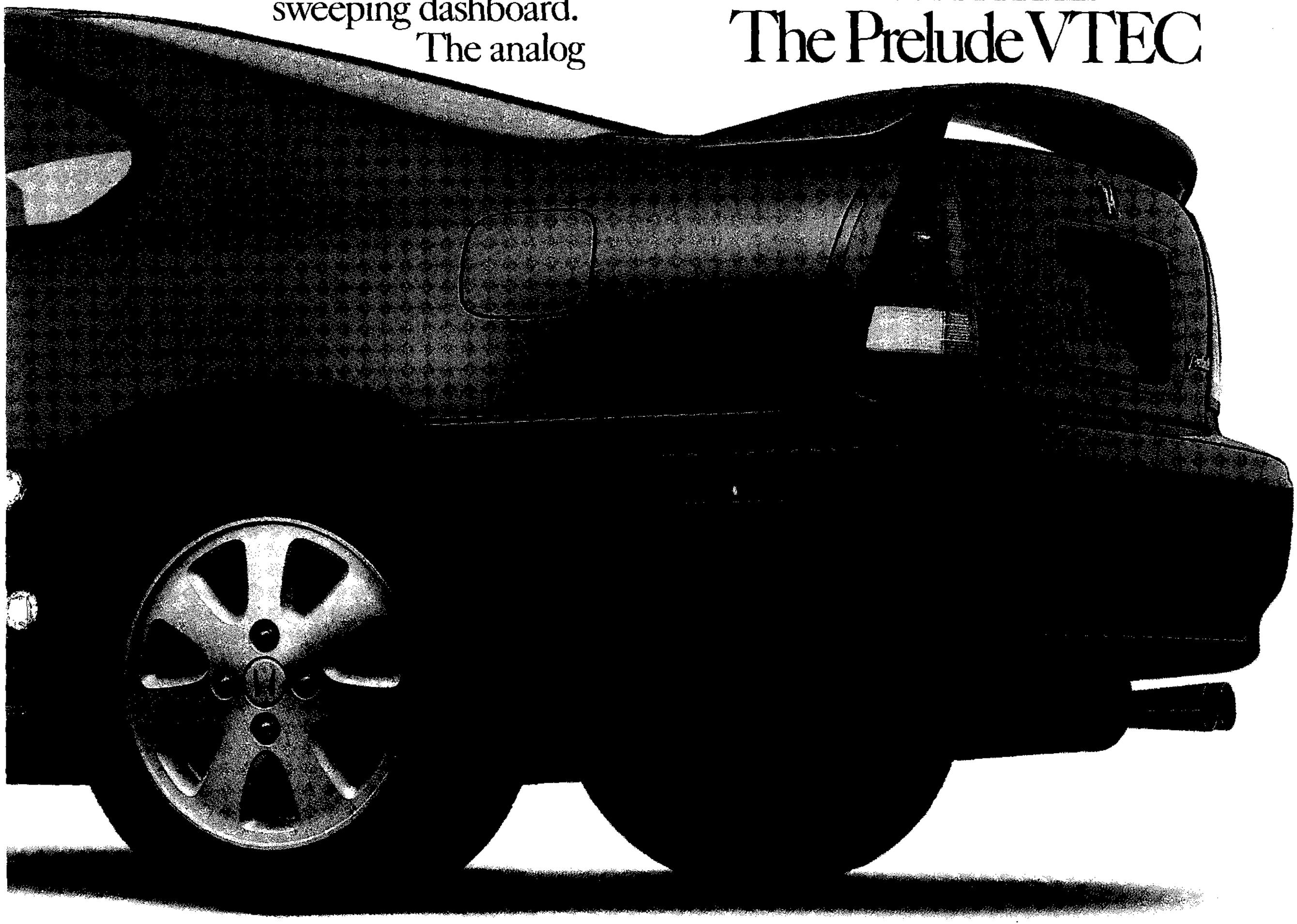

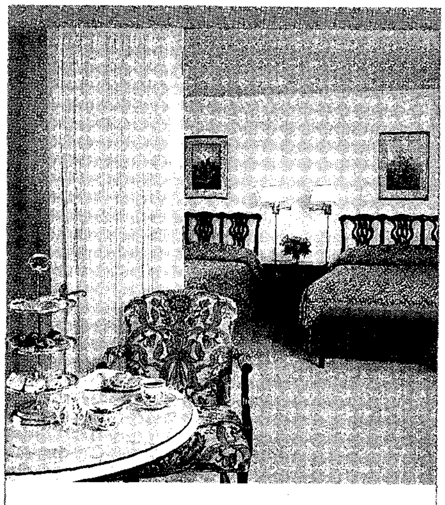

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THE NEW YORKER

MARCH 22, 1993

COMMENT Under the Gun 4

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN 8

THE TALK OF THE TOWN 33

DEPARTMENTS

Our Far-Flung Correspondents City Slickers . . . . . *Bryan Di Salvatore* 40
Why "Northern Exposure" isn't exactly a hit in Roslyn, Washington.

Letter from Downtown Cross-Dresser Dreams . . . . . *Guy Trebay* 49
A black drag queen breaks out of the ghetto and onto MTV.

ANNALS OF LAW The War for Baby Clausen . . . . . *Lucinda Franks* 56
A bitter two-year custody battle over a baby girl has challenged the law—and become a cause célèbre for anti-adoption activists.

ARTIST'S NOTEBOOK Blemished Escutcheons . . . . . *Edward Gorey* 63

PROFILE Shoot the Moon . . . . . *Susan Orlean* 74
Felipe Lopez, a high-school basketball star from the South Bronx, may be good enough—and lucky enough—to make it to the N.B.A. Photograph by Richard Avedon.

ARTIST AT LARGE Wish You Were Here . . . . . *Eugène Mihaesco* 81

ARTIST'S SKETCHBOOK To Be a Nominee . . . . . *Gerald Scarfe, Stephen Schiff* 86

FICTION "Maria Dos Prazeres" . . . . . *Gabriel García Márquez* 88

THE CRITICS

The Art World

The Museum for African Art, the Whitney Biennial . . . . . *Adam Gopnik* 97

The Current Cinema

"Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.," "Rich in Love" . . . . . *Terrence Rafferty* 102

Books

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's "Poet and Dancer" . . . . . *Deborah Garrison* 106
Briefly Noted 111

POEMS

"Brueghel's Two Monkeys" . . . . . *Wislawa Szymborska* 61
"Defiance" . . . . . *Charlie Smith* 70
"Cattails: A Marsh in March" . . . . . *Brad Leithauser* 78

SHOUTS AND MURMURS Friend of the Building . . . . . *Ian Frazier* 112

COVER *Cat Walk by Gürbüz Doğan Ekşioğlu*

DRAWINGS *Danny Shanahan, Edward Koren, Robert Mankoff, William Hamilton, Michael Maslin, Bernard Schoenbaum, Roz Chast, Michael Crawford, Dana Fradon, Donald Reilly, J.B. Handelsman, Leo Cullum, Jack Ziegler, Gahan Wilson, Victoria Roberts*

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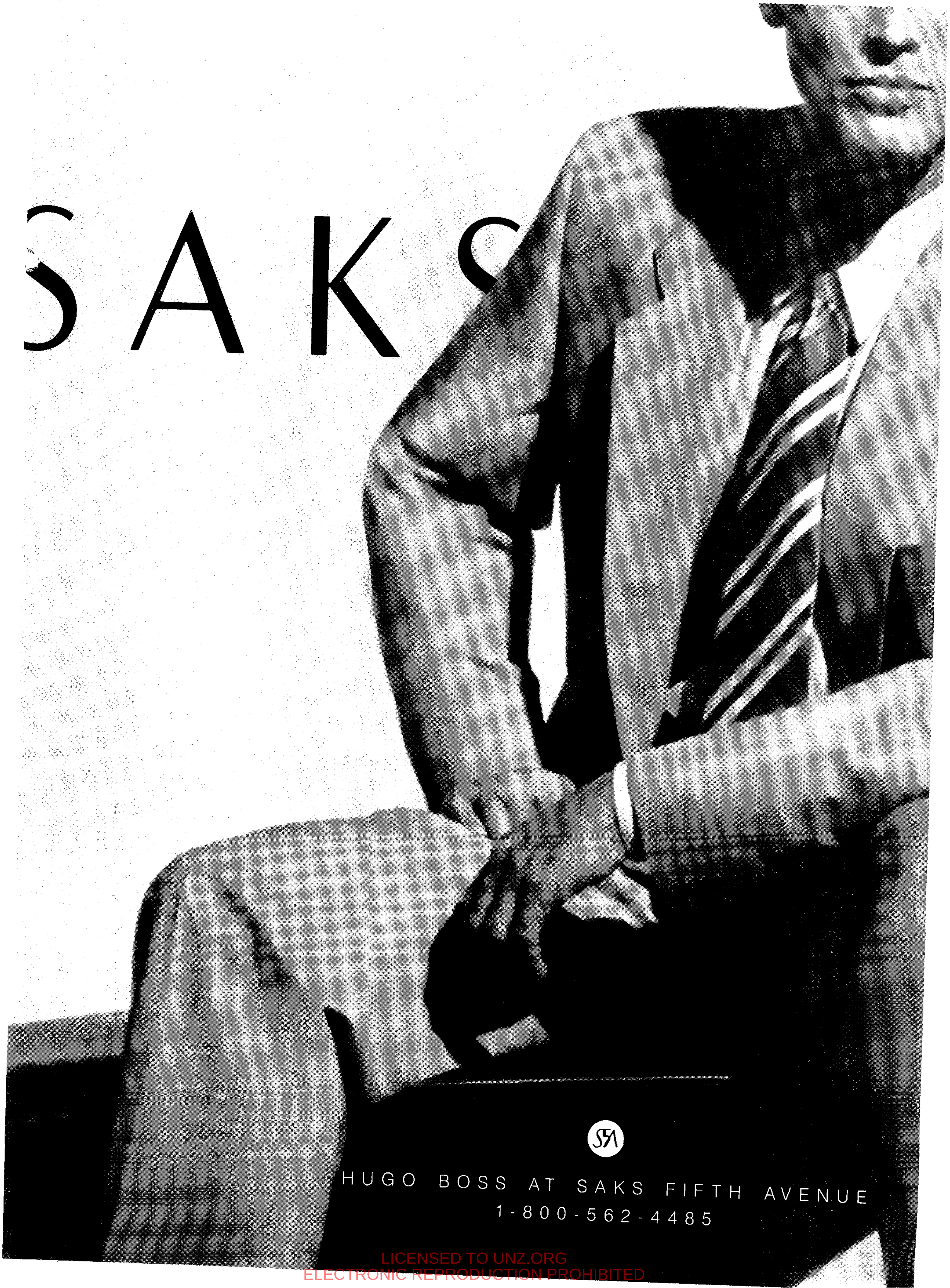

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COMMENT

UNDER THE GUN

THE Sunday-morning talk shows are not customarily a scene of revelation. Events of the spirit happen farther up the dial, against the royal blue of gospel choirs. But a recent segment of the CBS program "Face the Nation" provided an epiphany that was the equal of anything offered from the video pulpits.

In a discussion preceded by a detailed assessment of the violent standoff in Waco, Texas, the director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, Stephen Higgins, told the program's host, Bob Schieffer, that his agency, after years of public equivocation and demurral, had decided to express enthusiastic support for the so-called Brady Bill, a measure that would require a one-week waiting period for the sale of handguns.

"I don't believe I ever heard you say that back during the Bush Administration," Mr. Schieffer said. "At that time, you said that you would support it, I believe, if it were connected to other measures, like getting tough on crime, more prisons, and so forth. Are you now saying that you simply support the Brady Bill as is?"

"That's correct," Mr. Higgins said. "And we've never had four agents killed on a single day before."

There is no need to scorn Mr. Higgins for waiting until disaster hit so close to home. It is less than two months since his agency, a branch of the Treasury Department, was liberated from superiors who dared not support even the timidest gun-control measures for fear of offending the lobbyists and paymasters of the National Rifle Association. The vengeance of the N.R.A. has cost not a few officeholders their places; and not a few others, like the House Speaker, Tom Foley, of Washington State, have persuaded themselves that the only alternative to adopting pro-N.R.A. positions is a career in the private sector.

Lately, however, a few politicians have shown both courage and political skill in outmuscling the most macho of all the single-issue lobby groups. The governor of New Jersey, Jim Florio, who

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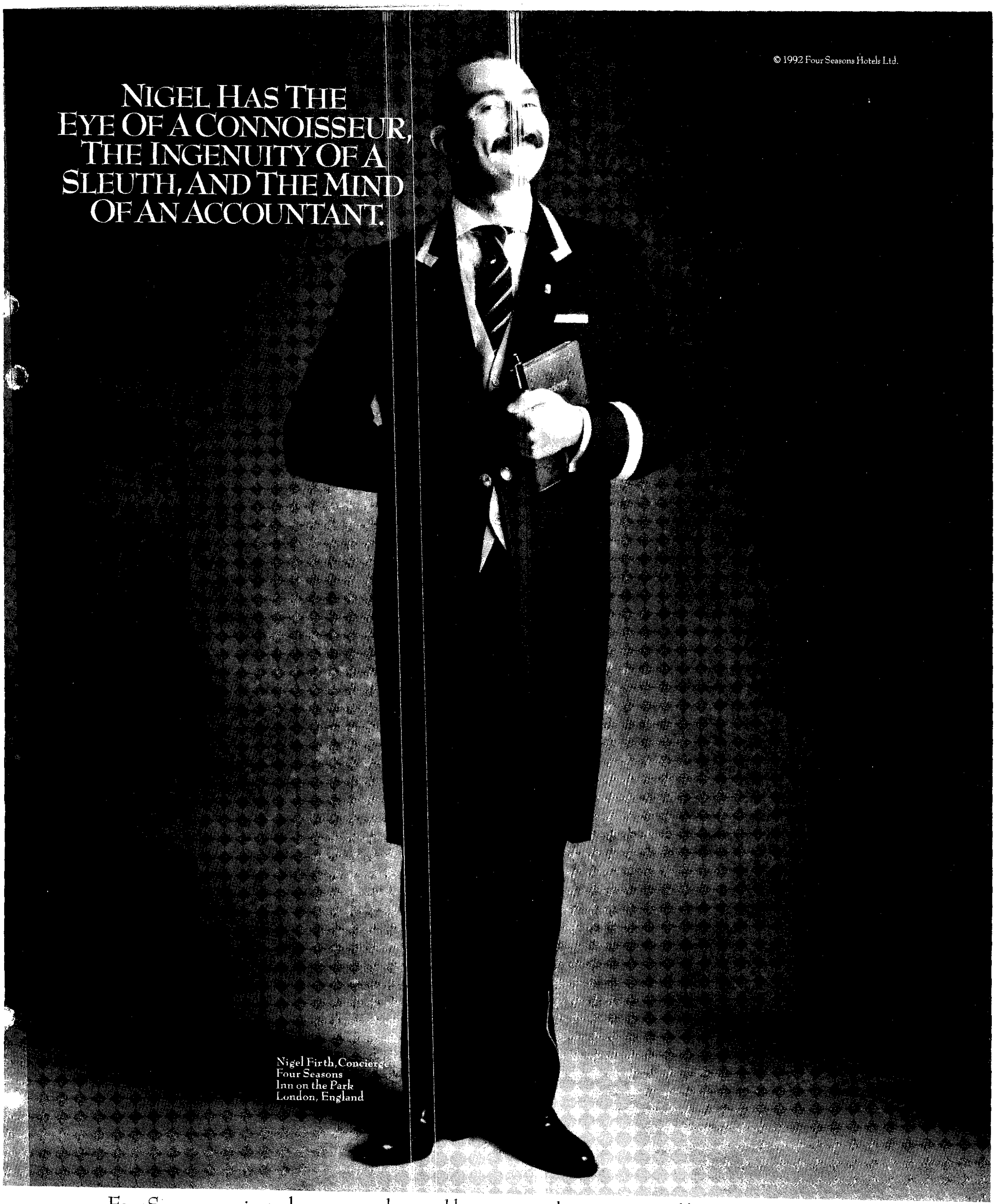
NIGEL HAS THE EYE OF A CONNOISSEUR, THE INGENUITY OF A SLEUTH, AND THE MIND OF AN ACCOUNTANT.

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is a Democrat, is pushing hard to prevent the Republican legislature from overriding his veto of a bill that would rescind the state's ban on the sale or possession of sixty kinds of semi-automatic weapons. The sixty include some of the favored accoutrements of the up-to-date drug dealer: the Intratec Tec 9, an easy-to-hide handgun; various clones of the Uzi and MAC-10 semi-automatic pistols; and several types of semi-automatic rifles distinguished by a vivid nickname—"street sweepers." Between two and three hundred thousand New Jersey residents—sportsmen all, no doubt—own such weapons, according to the *Times*. In the hope of defeating Mr. Florio's allies and perpetuating the lethal status quo, the N.R.A. spent nearly a quarter of a million dollars on legislative races in the state in 1991, and seventy of its seventy-eight candidates won. Remarkably, some of those legislators are now siding with the Governor, and the state may yet retain this patch of civilization.

The governor of Virginia, Douglas Wilder, who is also a Democrat, has been even more successful in confounding the N.R.A. Working with the state's United States Attorney, Richard Cullen, who is a Republican, Mr. Wilder put together a coalition of legislators, teachers, parents, and law-enforcement officials whose combined pressure resulted, last month, in the enactment of a piece of gun-control legislation of major importance. Until then, the seven thousand gun dealers in Virginia were free to sell as many guns to as many buyers as they wished. Virginia, in consequence, had become the gun mall of the Northeast corridor. Drug dealers would send runners to Virginia to buy trunkfuls of guns and bring them North, where the purchasing laws are far stricter. As a direct result, in the summer of 1991 a highly decorated retired New York police officer, Robert Zink, was shot and killed with a Rossi .38 revolver while riding the subway in Brooklyn; the same gun had been used the day before to kill a man named Wah J. Lee during a holdup near Prospect Park, and to wound a Brooklyn minister, Kenneth Prill, in another robbery; police found that the gun had made its way to the city from Norfolk. That case was entirely typical of the Virginia connection. Now, thanks to Governor Wilder's efforts, nearly every customer of his state's gun shops will be limited to the purchase of one gun per month—a number that should satisfy all but those in no good need of satisfaction.

The news from New Jersey and Virginia is encouraging, but the other side is very far from giving up. "I don't think we're losing at all," Wayne LaPierre, the chief executive officer of the N.R.A., said the other day. "When they pushed through a ban on semi-automatics in California a couple of years ago, everyone thought the same thing would happen in every state. But no other state except New Jersey has adopted it, and Capitol Hill has rejected it. Believe me, they have written the death notice of the N.R.A. so many times that it is a joke."

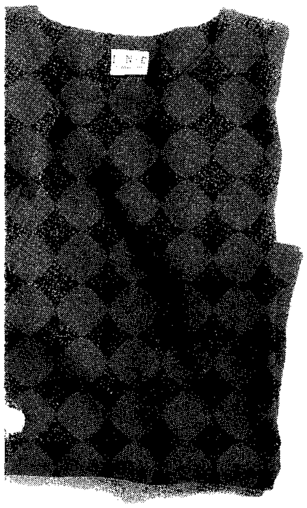
The joke, and it is a ghoulish one, is that the Virginia bill is unlikely to have much real effect in places like New York and Washington, D.C. The gun dealers of West Virginia, Texas, and Georgia, among other states, will happily take up where those of Virginia have now been obliged to leave off. So arsenals of the sort assembled locally by the Branch Davidians of Waco will remain available to Americans of all faiths, occupations, and places of residence.

Mr. LaPierre and the N.R.A. try to deflect arguments in favor of gun control by putting the blame for the rising level of violence on an insufficiency of prisons. It is true that guns are not in and of themselves the cause of murder, but they are usually the means by which it is committed. To claim, as the N.R.A. does, that there is no relation between crime and the instruments used to commit it is the purest sophistry.

Polls have repeatedly shown that eighty per cent of the population, impatient with such sophistry, wants increased gun control. Small wonder why. More than sixty thousand people have been killed with guns in this country in the last five years. The country is flooded with firearms; there are about two hundred million guns in circulation, one for just about every American. The federal system of licensing gun dealers does almost nothing to slow down the proliferation. In 1991, a total of thirty-four thousand applications for licenses to sell guns were submitted to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms; just thirty-seven were denied. The Bureau's officials have neither the time nor the money to audit the applications properly, and the N.R.A. has so successfully lobbied Congress that not a penny has ever been spent on computerizing the federal records of gun buyers, which exist mostly in the unwieldy form of slips of paper stored in cardboard boxes.

While the N.R.A. and the gun manufacturers that support it keep the battle on a plane of incremental change, the gun culture, combined with the rise of cheap crack cocaine and urban poverty, oppresses every city in the country. The N.R.A. is still trafficking in frontier mythology in an era when the coonskin cap and the musket have yielded to the crack pipe and the Glock. "Times have changed," Anthony Briscoe, a twenty-nine-year-old convicted drug dealer at the District of Columbia's Lorton prison, told an interviewer from the Washington *Post* a while ago. "You don't have to get a black eye, busted lip or knocked out. Now, it's the nine millimetre and 'I'm going to show you how to get knocked out and not ever get back up.' "

If efforts to control the proliferation of handguns, semi-automatics, and other instruments of murder are to be truly effective, they will have to be made on the federal level. That the very notion of a federal system of registration for guns and licensing for gun owners, in analogy with how states treat cars and drivers, is still considered a utopian vision shows how pathetically far we have to go. Still, the Brady Bill would be a start, and a national version of the Virginia law would be a good second step. President Clinton has endorsed the first and praised the second, and Governors Wilder and Florio have performed the signal service of proving that the N.R.A. is not invincible. It remains for the public to imbue its representatives with enough courage—and not all that much of it is needed, really—to stand up to the bluster of the country's nastiest lobby. ♦



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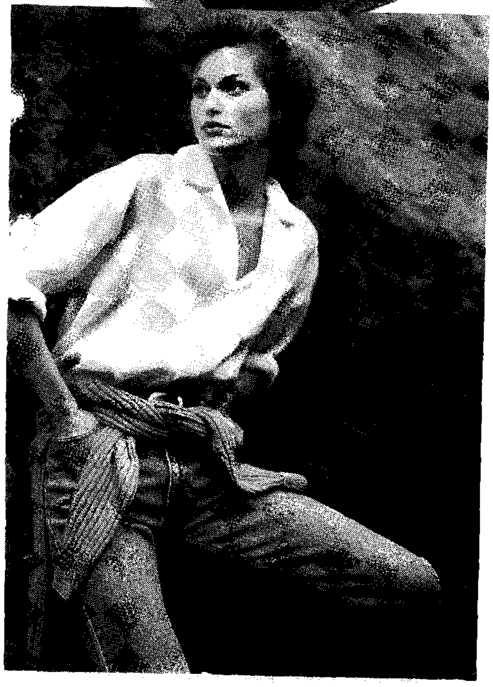

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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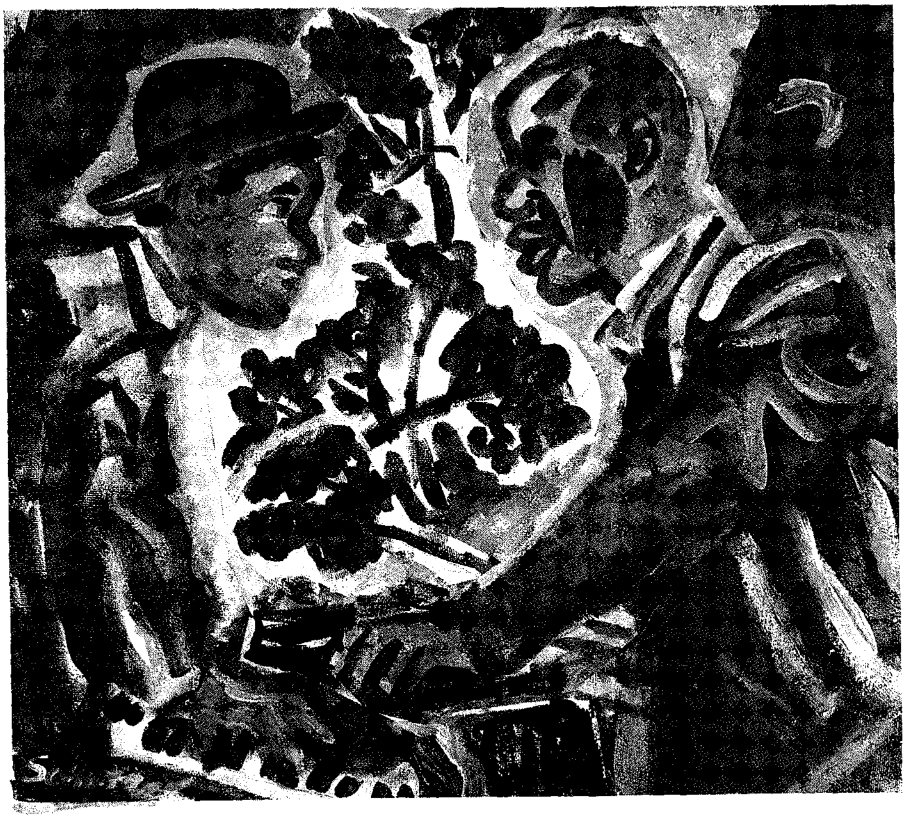
THE THEATRE

Thin Skin

MARK DUNN has always had a flair for titles (his last play was called "Sand Pies and Scissorlegs"), but nothing in his past work outdoes the label wrapped around his play that opens this week at Actors' Playhouse: "The Second Annual Heart O' Texas Eczema Telethon." The telethon part is easy to explain. "I wanted to set a play in a small-town television station," the thirty-six-year-old playwright says. The Texas part is easy, too. "Southerners—and Texans—are just more interesting. I grew up in Memphis and spent a few years in Austin before moving to New York, five years ago, so I have a pretty good feel for these things."

But, as Larry King might put it: Why eczema, Mark? "I suffer from it myself," he says. "And, to tell you the truth, while I've been putting this play together and spending a lot of time on the phone, it's gotten a lot worse, at least in my ear. But to answer the question more directly, I wanted something that would offend as few people as possible. Putting eczema in the title, I thought, would make it clear that the play's a comedy." Not everyone, unfortunately, seems to grasp the joke. "I was taking play posters around the Village, and when I stopped in a restaurant and asked to put a poster up, one of the staff balked. 'I've got eczema,' she told me, 'and it's *not* funny.' "



Duane Boutté and Delroy Lindo in "The Heliotrope Bouquet."

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

ANOTHER TIME—A play by Ronald Harwood, about a Jewish family in South Africa. Malcolm McDowell, Marian Seldes, Joan Copeland, Michael Lombard, and James Waterston make up the cast. In previews. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797.)

BACK TO BACHARACH AND DAVID—A new musical revue, directed by Kathy Najimy. The singers are Melinda Gilb, Steve Gunderson, Sue Mosher, and Lillias White. In previews. (Club 53, Sixth Ave. at 53rd St. 261-5853.)

CANDIDA—Shaw's play, with Mary Steenburgen, Robert Foxworth, and Robert Sean Leonard. Gloria Muzio directed. In previews. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

THE CONFESSIONS OF STEPIN FETCHIT—A play written by Matt Robinson and based on the life of the actor Lincoln Perry. Previews through March 20. Opens March 21 at 3. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074.)

A COUPLE OF BLAGUARDS—The actors Frank and Malachy McCourt reminisce about their Irish childhood. Opens March 18 at 8, and runs through March 28. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 757-3318.)

FACE VALUE—A new play by David Henry Hwang, with Michael Countryman, Mia Korf, Jane Krakowski, Mark Linn-Baker, Gus Rogerson, Gina Torres, Jeff Weiss, and B. D. Wong. Previews through March 20. Opens March 21 at 6:30. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

LAUREEN'S WHEREABOUTS—A play by Larry Ketron, set in South Carolina. The cast comprises Mark Blum, Mia Dillon, Carolyn McCormick, Kevin O'Rourke, and Scott Sowers. Previews begin March 18. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

NEW YORK THEATRE WORKSHOP—Presenting two plays by Caryl Churchill, in rotating repertory: OWNERS, from 1972, and TRAPS, from 1977. Both are in previews. (79 E. 4th St. 302-6989.)

ONE SHOE OFF—Jeffrey DeMunn, Daniel Gerroll, Mary Beth Hurt, Brian Kerwin, and Jennifer Tilly constitute the cast of a new play by Tina Howe. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

PUTTING IT TOGETHER—This celebration of Stephen Sondheim's music was first seen last year in Oxford, England. With Julie Andrews, Stephen Collins, Christopher Durang, Michael Rupert, and Rachel York. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

REDWOOD CURTAIN—Jeff Daniels stars in a play by Lanford Wilson. Marshall W. Mason was the director. Previews begin March 19. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

THE SECOND ANNUAL HEART O' TEXAS ECZEMA TELETHON—A comedy by Mark Dunn. Opens March 16 at 6:30. (Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 691-6226.)

THE SONG OF JACOB ZULU—Tug Yourgrau's play is set in South Africa and concerns a young man accused of bombing a mall. Zakes Mokae, K. Todd Freeman, and the musical group Ladysmith Black Mambazo are featured. In previews. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THREE HOTELS—A new play by Jon Robin Baitz, with Christine Lahti and Ron Rifkin. Previews begin March 19. (Circle Repertory Company, 99 Seventh Ave. S. 924-7100.)

THE WIZ—Stephanie Mills and André De Shields return to their original roles in this revival of the 1975 musical. Previews March 16-17. Opens March 18 at 8, and runs through March 28. (Beacon, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070.)

OPENED RECENTLY

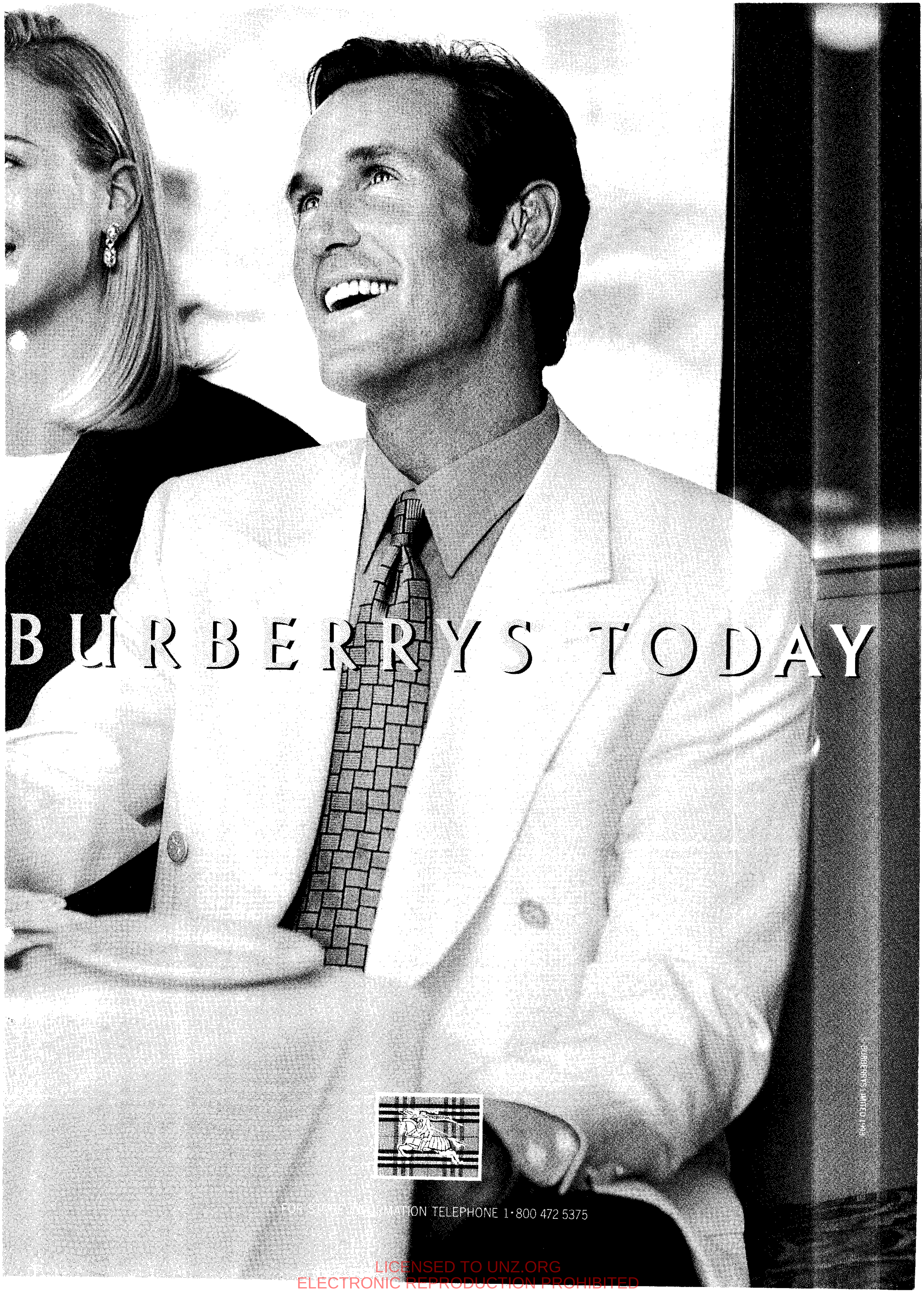
AVEN' U BOYS—A play by Frank Pugliese, with Ron Eldard, Michael Imperioli, Lucinda Jenney, Cynthia Martells, Adrian Pasdar, and Lili Taylor. (Reviewed in this issue.) (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 564-8038.)

THE BEST OF FRIENDS—A play by Hugh Whitemore, with Roy Dotrice, Michael Allinson, and Diana Douglas. The work is about George Bernard Shaw and two of his friends, Sir Sydney Cockerell and Dame Laurentia McLachlan, the Abbess of Stanbrook. This drama was first done in 1988, in London. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

THE DESTINY OF ME—Or "Confrontations with My Father." Larry Kramer's latest work is rarely less than involving, but the dramatic structure—a family-memory play grafted onto the present-day story of an exhausted AIDS activist—breaks down for good in the second act. Many people who stay for the third act, however, claim to be deeply moved by the conclusion. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200. Closes March 21.)

FOOL MOON—Bill Irwin and David Shiner are the inspired clowns in a show that is perfection itself. The only sound you'll hear is the merry music of the Red Clay Ramblers and the abundant laughter of the audience. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/8/93.) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211.)

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 1993—Once again, a galaxy of parodies that sharpen into satire. This edition is as funny as most of its predecessors. Among the new shows under consideration are "Guys and Dolls" and "Falsettos," and the holdovers include "Les Misérables" and "The Phantom of the Opera." Gerard Alessandrini, as if you had to be told, is the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THE THEATRE—Cont'd

inspired writer and director, and Susanne Blakeslee, Dorothy Kiara, Brad Oscar, and Craig Wells are the splendid performers, doing a large assortment of roles. (1/25/93) (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.)

The Goodbye Girl—Bernadette Peters and Martin Short, two brilliant, funny stars, transform this otherwise indifferent musical adaptation of Neil Simon's movie into a sporadically festive evening. The dances by Graciela Daniele are more than helpful, as is the comic support by John Christopher Jones. Michael Kidd directed. (3/15/93) (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

The Heliotrope Bouquet by Scott Joplin & Louis Chauvin—Eric Overmyer's play, about the originators of ragtime, is almost done in by accursed amplification, but fortunately Delroy Lindo's beautiful performance as Joplin manages to cut through the din, as does Duane Boutté's as Chauvin. With Terry Waldo at the piano, the ragtime music is always audible and always welcome. (3/15/93) (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes March 21.)

Hello Muddah, Hello Fadduh—A musical based on the song parodies of Allan Sherman and offering further proof that Camp Lite is taking over Off Broadway. The show was conceived and written by Douglas Bernstein and Rob Krausz. (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330.)

Jean Cocteau Repertory—Presenting **the cenci**, an 1819 verse drama by Percy Bysshe Shelley. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

Jeffrey—A comedy, by Paul Rudnick, about love in the age of AIDS; with John Michael Higgins. It is less a fleshed-out play than a series of Scenes from Gay Life, but Mr. Rudnick can quip with the best of them. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

Love's Labour's Lost—Shakespeare's comedy, directed by Michael Langham. A Theatre for a New Audience production. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200. Closes April 3.)

The Night Larry Kramer Kissed Me—A series of vignettes, by David Drake, about contemporary gay life. Starting March 17, Eric Paeper replaces the author, who is taking this one-man show to San Francisco. (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 564-8038.)

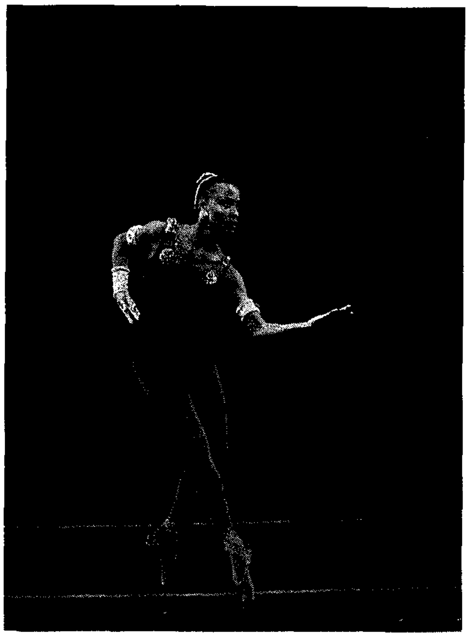
Oleanna—David Mamet, in fine, curmudgeonly form, takes on political correctness, sexual harassment, and a number of other topics in this brief, powerful drama that continues to stir up the ideologues. The play's skepticism is as evenhanded as it is corrosive. With William H. Macy and Mary McCann. Not to be missed. (11/16/92) (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 307-4100.)

Phaedra—Joanne Camp has the title role in Jean Racine's play (in a new translation by Margaret Rawlings). (Pearl, 125 W. 22nd St. 645-7708. Closes March 20.)

Robert Johnson: Trick the Devil—A play about the legendary blues musician, by Bill Harris. (Henry Street Settlement, 466 Grand St. Closes March 21. For reservations, call 576-9028.)

The Sisters Rosensweig—Wendy Wasserstein's new play, a comedy with serious undertones, is about the reunion in London of three American Jewish sisters—an international banker, a travel writer, and a wife and mother who's a professional dispenser of advice. They are portrayed by Jane Alexander, Christine Estabrook, and Madeline Kahn. The spirit of Chekhov hovers but never intrudes. Laughter is continuous. The show has recently moved to Broadway from Lincoln Center's Mitzi E. Newhouse. (11/2/92) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

Someone Who'll Watch Over Me—Alec McCowen (English), Stephen Rea (Irish), and James McDaniel (American) give stunning performances as hostages in Beirut in Frank McGuinness's moving and humorous play. Robin Lefèvre directed. (12/7/92) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)



Lisa Attles in Dance Theatre of Harlem's "Medea."

Wilder, Wilder, Wilder—Three one-acters by the invaluable Thornton—"The Long Christmas Dinner," "Pullman Car Hiawatha," and, best of all, "The Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden." The actors, though most of them are comparatively inexperienced, do a very good job, so the real star of the occasion is Edward Berkeley, the director. (12/21/92) (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 662-8562.)

Wings—Jeffrey Lunden and Arthur Perlman's musical adaptation of a 1978 play by Arthur Kopit. The musical premièred last year at Chicago's Goodman Theatre. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

Winter Lies—A thriller, set in New York, by Robert Clyman. Robert LuPone has the lead. (INTAR, 420 W. 42nd St. 465-1761.)

Wrong Turn at Lungfish—The play owes more to day-in, day-out television than it does to the theatre, but it does at least serve as an occasion to present George C. Scott as a grouchy, dying old professor. Mr. Scott does not let us down, and Tony Danza, making his New York stage début, demonstrates that he deserves a better part under happier circumstances. (3/8/93) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

LONG RUNS

beau jest: Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780. . . . **blue man group/tubes:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **cats:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **crazy for you:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **falsettos:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **the fantasticks:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **five guys named moe:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **forever plaid:** Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400. . . . **guys and dolls:** Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **jelly's last jam:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **les misérables:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **miss saigon:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **nunsense:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321. . . . **perfect crime:** Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 695-3401. . . . **the phantom of the opera:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **tony n' tina's wedding:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200. . . . **the will rogers follies:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 730-8200.

DANCE

A Big Step in Johannesburg

The Dance Theatre of Harlem—founded and directed by Arthur Mitchell, a former star of the New York City Ballet—this week opens, for the first time in its twenty-four-year history, at City Ballet's own New York State Theatre. Yet, as important a showcase as this is for D.T.H. artistically, and as sentimental an occasion as it may be for Mr. Mitchell personally, for historical significance it can hardly rival the nearly all-black company's fourteen performances last September to open the newly renovated Civic Theatre in Johannesburg—a house that until the late nineteen-seventies had by law been accessible only to whites, and that through the nineteen-eighties continued to attract largely white audiences.

Augustus van Heerden, a native of Johannesburg and currently a ballet master and principal dancer with D.T.H., recounts how, as a ballet student in Johannesburg, he was once "smuggled" into the Civic to see a performance. In a recent conversation, he spoke of what a big step D.T.H.'s Civic appearances had represented for "the community" in South Africa. Another D.T.H. dancer and Johannesburg native, Felicity de Jager, spoke of how exciting it was to dance for audiences that included Nelson Mandela. One night, Mr. Mandela came backstage to greet the dancers. What was his favorite ballet? She thought for a moment. "He liked Mr. Mitchell's 'John Henry,' " she answered. "I think he said it reminded him of himself."

Merce Cunningham Dance Company—Final performances of the engagement. March 17 at 8: "Beach Birds" and "Enter.". . . ¶ March 18 at 8: "Channels/Inserts," "Doubletoss," and "Loosestrife.". . . ¶ March 19-20 at 8: "Doubletoss" and "Enter.". . . ¶ March 20 at 2: "Channels/Inserts," "Touchbase," and "Change of Address.". . . ¶ March 21 at 3: "Beach Birds," "Doubletoss," and "Trackers." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Dance Theatre of Harlem—March 17 at 8 and March 20 at 2 and 8: "The Four Temperaments," "A Song for Dead Warriors," and "Concerto in F.". . . ¶ March 18-19 at 8 and March 21 at 1:30 and 7:30: "Dougla" and "Giselle.". . . ¶ March 23 at 8: "Dialogues," "Medea," and "Ginastera." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through March 28.)

Feld Ballets/NY—March 17 at 8: "Over the Pavement," "Evoe," "Hadji," and "The Relative Disposition of the Parts.". . . ¶ March 18 at 8: "Aurora I," "Endsong," and "Wolfgang Strategies.". . . ¶ March 19 at 8: "Aurora I," "Endsong," and "The Jig Is Up.". . . ¶ March 20 at 8: "To the Naked Eye," "Kore," "Blooms Wake," and "The Relative Disposition of the Parts.". . . ¶ March 21 at 2: "Harbinger," "Kore," "Danzon Cubano," and "The Jig Is Up.". . . ¶ March 21 at 7:30: "Aurora I," "Circa," and "Wolfgang Strategies.". . . ¶ March 23 at 8: "Aurora I," "Over the Pavement," and "The Relative Disposition of the Parts." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through April 4.)

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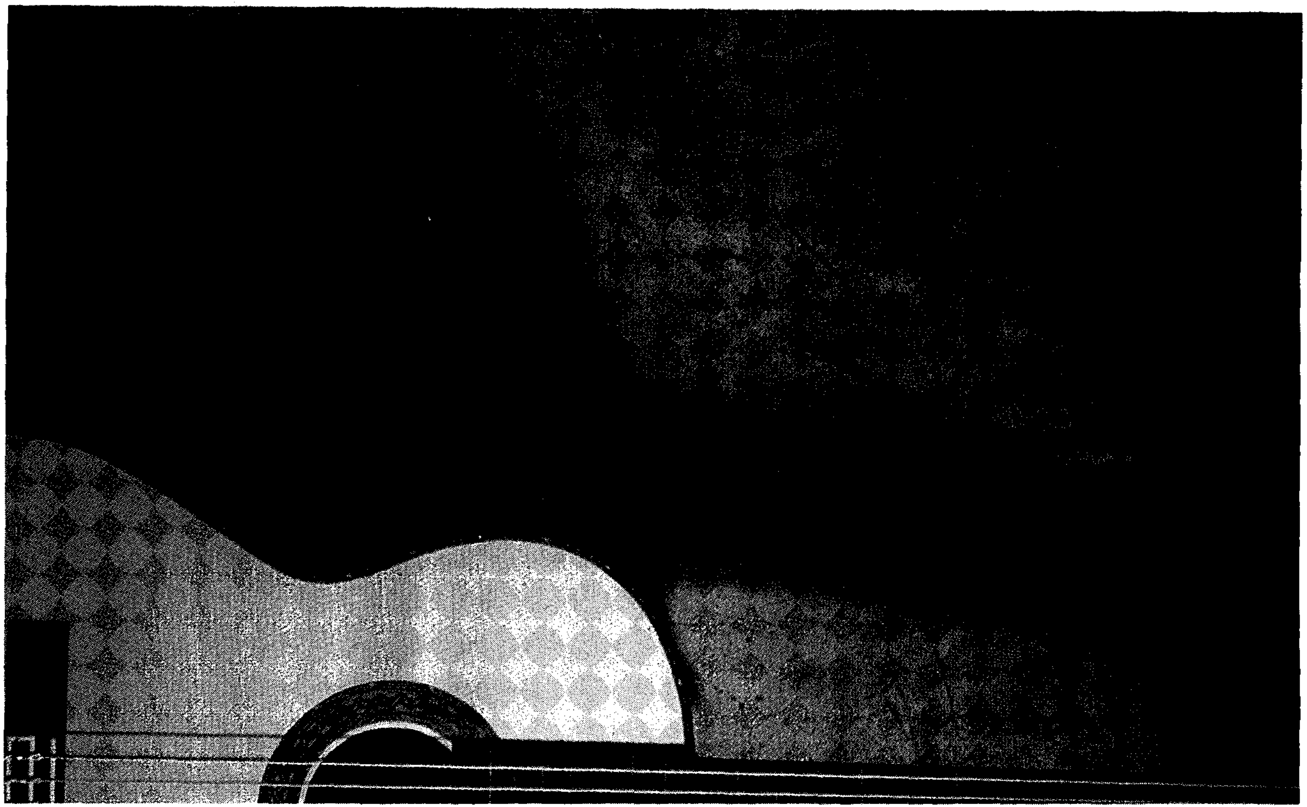

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NIGHT LIFE

All That Matters

Last year, when Superchunk released their second album, "No Pocky for Kitty," much of the alternative-rock press deemed them the only band that mattered. Though most such groups are forgotten a month later, Superchunk has hung tough. The Chapel Hill foursome, which will appear at the Grand on March 20, has a complex, shifting sound that culls from punk, metal, grunge, and art rock. And they consistently write solid, concise pop tunes. In explaining the band's approach, Mac McCaughaun, the lead singer and songwriter, once told a reporter, "No matter how much noise and disarray is used in the sound, you just have to have a song underneath."

The band, which formed in 1989, recently released a third album, "On the Mouth." It's a fierce, scrappy record that hardly ever sags. McCaughaun's strangulated vocals tend to be buried in the mix, but tantalizing phrases—"We are reaching a new low," "I guess I remembered it wrong"—occasionally break through. The group's attitude—a combination of irony and confession, defiance and longing—is familiar enough, but their music has an extra measure of passion and brains.

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out some of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—**DAUGHERTY & FIELD,** a music-and-comedy team who have been known to sing "Blue Moon" and "Blue Room" at the same time, are currently at work in the Oak Room. Daugherty favors one-liners; Field, the pianist, prefers old-fashioned mugging. Dining.

Ballroom, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A cool green music hall that features a steady stream of international pop and cabaret stars, as well as the occasional drag queen. The Ballroom is also a tapas restaurant—if you haven't had dinner, you may never make it to the show. **MARIETTE HARTLEY** is here through March 21, and **CLINT HOLMES** starts up on March 23.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—A great black loft that's jammed with row after row of tables—it looks a little like the site of a standardized test. Despite the cramped quarters, though, the Bottom Line is a pleasant place to take in a folk or rock show. **DARLENE LOVE** ends a two-day run on March 17 and appears again on March 23-24. Love's set is divided into two acts. The first includes narrated segments meant to bring youngsters up to speed on her life story, and features highlights from the singer's long list of hits. Among the songs she reprises are "He's a Rebel," "(Today I Met) The Boy I'm Gonna Marry," and "All Alone on Christmas," from "Home Alone 2." The second act is dedicated to new material. **BUDDY GUY** is here on March 18; Maddy Prior appears on March 19; on March 20, Dave Mason shares a bill with Danny Kalb and Jimmy Vivino. Burgers, fries, and other things to make your heart beat faster.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—The art collection in this neighborhood restaurant, bar, and jazz club is a curator's worst nightmare. Fortunately, the musicians who gather round the Steinway each night are usually more harmonious. Bassist **CHRISTIAN MC BRIDE,** pianist **CARLOS MC KINNEY,** and drummer **CLARENCE PENN** are here through March 20; the **RALPH MOORE** quartet is in on March 21; pianist **JOANNE BRACKEEN** and bassist **IRA COLEMAN** start up on March 22. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The pastel uptown spa known as the Café Carlyle is home to **EARTHA KITT,** who jokingly refers to her show here as "the mature Eartha Kitt." Kitt has a staggering list of stage, TV, and recording credits. Most of her songs are tales of men and money, and she doesn't so much sing her lyrics as growl them, prowling the stage like a lioness protecting her cubs. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **RONNY WHYTE** presides at the piano.

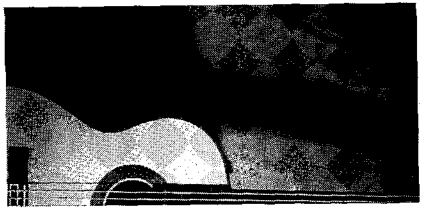
Eagle Tavern, 355 W. 14th St. (924-0275)—Where swordfish leap on almost every wall. Where a cat with black and white spots sometimes walks the length of the bar. Where barbirds stare at sports on the tube. And where, between the Sinatra and Streisand that emanates from the jukebox, one can often hear snatches of live bluegrass and Irish music floating in from the bright back room. On March 17, the Tavern will be the site of a St. Patrick's Day Musical Marathon that will include performances by Tom Doherty & Friends, John Dillon, Brian Conway, and Ellis Island, which is made up of Peter Fitzgerald, Dan Cummins, and Billy McComiskey. March 19 belongs to Martin Hayes, who plays fiddle, and John Williams, who works out on the concertina and the button accordion.

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7900)—The seating arrangement in this long, narrow, red-velvet-and-mirror-walled basement makes flying coach seem roomy; nevertheless, it's one of the city's top jazz spots—thanks largely to the club's talent bookers. But watch your head. The **NEW YORK VOICES** are here through March 21, and singer **MARLENA SHAW** performs with a trio as of March 23. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL** leads a trio. Dining.

Five Spot, 4 W. 31st St. (631-0100)—The latest entrant in the jazz-club sweepstakes. The Five Spot is set in a mammoth turn-of-the-century ballroom. The space is all marble and gilt, with a few modern touches, such as the zebra-patterned carpeting in the V.I.P. room upstairs. **STANLEY TURRENTINE** is here through March 21. Turrentine, a tenor saxophonist, came up via Ray Charles' band and the Max Roach quintet, eventually landing at Blue Note records, where he recorded a series of memorable albums in the nineteen-sixties. His style has echoes of Coleman Hawkins and Sonny Rollins, among others, and is shot through with the blues. Beginning March 23, pianist **MC COY TYNER,** who's usually seen leading a trio, stretches out with a big band. Dining. Closed Mondays.

Grand, 76 E. 13th St. (777-0600)—Home of the late Cat Club. The new owners have given the place a much needed facelift—extra bars, a paint job, and a booming dance-club sound system. **SUPERCHUNK** is in on March 20, along with Bettie Serveert and Tsunami.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St.—This two-floor establishment has been all things to all people: meeting hall, rock club, jazz club, Off Broadway theatre. Physically, the place is sagging a bit, but it has an odd, dingy charm. **ADAM ANT,** who first appeared on the scene in the late seventies and who will turn up here on March 19, learned pop and self-promotion at the hands of a master: Malcolm McLaren, of Sex Pistols fame. Ant has made more than a few godawful records, but every so often he comes up with some fun, junky bit of pop that sticks in the brain. Zuzu's Petals will open. For concert information, call 249-8870. . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday night, at the Continental Club. The dancers



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NIGHT LIFE—Cont'd

all share a passion for the Lindy Hop, a dance that involves a lot of whirling and the occasional display of underwear. The Zoob orchestra will be in on March 21. Sets from eight until midnight. For information on the Society, call 696-9737.

Lone Star Roadhouse, 240 W. 52nd St. (245-2950)—It's named for its Texas décor, but lately a more apt name would be the Second Chance, since so many lost, forgotten, or faded rockers turn up here. But the club's busy schedule includes a variety of newer acts, too. **PAT KILBRIDE** and **SPEIR MOR** share the honors on March 17; and **LESLIE WEST** and **RICK DERRINGER** turn up on March 20. Dining.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. (1-201 798-4064)—The beer of choice here is Rolling Rock—by a landslide—and the crowd may make you feel as if you have a midterm to study for, but many of the bands that play here today will be playing somewhere more expensive tomorrow. On March 18, Hazel and Screeching Weasel are in; on March 19, **COME** and the Grifters; and on March 20, D Generation, Wax, and Our American Cousins.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—Revues have become Rainbow & Stars' strong suit, and for the next couple of months the club will be home to a Rodgers and Hammerstein rave-up called "A Grand Night for Singing." The cast includes some familiar faces from Broadway: **VICTORIA CLARK, JASON GRAAE, MARTIN VIDNOVIC, LYNNE WINTERSTELLER,** and **KAREN ZIÉMBA.** Dining.

Red Blazer Too, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—Mondays belong to the Smith Street Jazz Society, Tuesdays and Fridays to **VINCE GIORDANO AND THE NIGHTHAWKS,** Thursdays to Stan Rubin's big band, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and His Stompers. Sister Mary Beatta, a singing nun, is in on March 17.

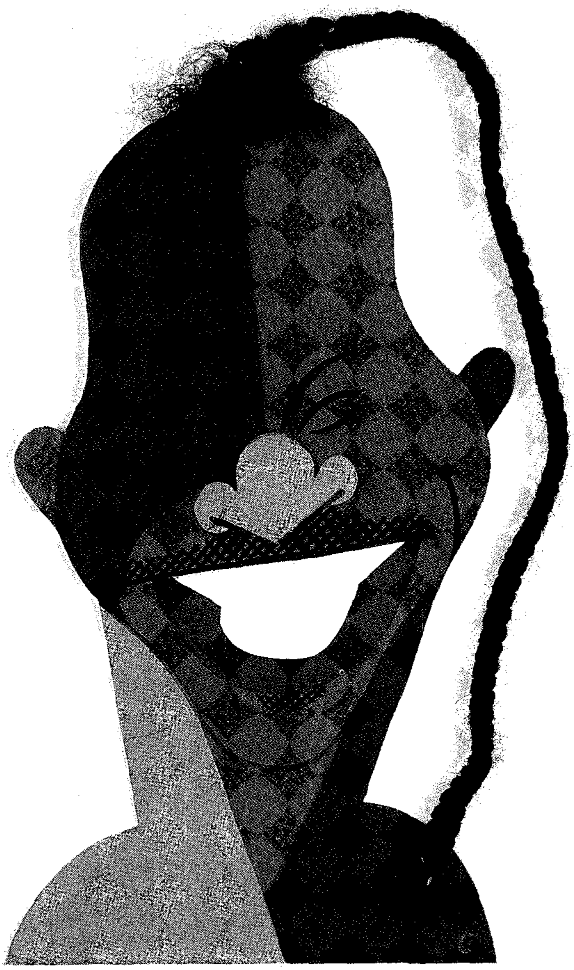
Ritz, 254 W. 54th St. (541-8900)—This space was once a theatre, as the cherubim friezes and Louis the Something ceiling attest. Then it was Studio 54, and, if you try real hard, you can still hear the grunts, moans, and snorts of seventies disco ghosts. **BLACK 47,** which will be here on March 17, started out by playing after-hours gigs at an Irish bar downtown. The lineup consisted of a trombonist, an uilleann pipes player, and a singer-guitarist who sang fervent variations on the Irishman-in-New-York theme. Now a full-blown band, Black 47 may be on the verge of greatness, which is no big secret. Good luck getting anywhere near the ticket booth.

Russian Tea Room, 150 W. 57th St. (265-0947)—Street level, caviar; upstairs, an intimate cabaret. Marilyn Sokol will hold down the fort on March 21, and songwriter Steve Lutvak will display his wares on March 22. Dining and, of course, drinking.

Sounds of Brazil, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut decorated with a fruit-and-bamboo motif and dedicated to such things as calypso, reggae, and bossa nova. There's always someone onstage shouting "Put your hands in the air!" The **CHANTING HOUSE** is here on March 17; **PANCHO SANCHEZ** comes in on March 18; Johnny Ray and Salsa con Clase perform on March 22. Bossa supernova **ASTRUD GILBERTO** begins a three-day gig on March 23. Closed Sundays. Dining.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—One seldom sees jazz musicians leaning back to back as they kick out the jams, or craning their necks to harmonize into a mike. That's not to say that they don't interact onstage, but they're usually more subtle about it than rockers are. The nod, the glance, the faint smile are their preferred gestures, and this brown-toned ski chalet of a jazz club is a fine place to study such group dynamics. Trumpeter **MILES EVANS** and his big band are usually relegated to Mondays nights, but, this week, for the club's tenth anniversary, Sweet Basil's house band has been bumped to prime time: you can catch the electrified orchestra at work through March 22. There will be guest soloists, too, including Toninho Horta, Bill Evans, and Peter Washington. Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The late Max Gordon, who opened this holiest of jazz shrines in 1935, once described the club's early patrons as a mix of "poets, W.P.A. writers, hustlers, broads on the make, and moochers." The **GEORGE COLEMAN** quartet, which also features Harold Mabern, Jamil Nasser, and Billy Higgins, is at work until March 21. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.



Me Phi Me at Wetlands.

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—This locus of grooviness is usually thought of as a Deadhead hangout, but the club has also been the launching pad for a generation of young New York bands like Blues Traveler and the Spin Doctors. Shows here can be absurdly tight and sweaty—the club seems to have a hard time turning people away. **ME PHI ME,** who will be here on March 19, belongs to that new wave of melodic, user-friendly rap that also includes Arrested Development and Digable Planets. His raps promote individuality; his music, which makes use of acoustic guitars, of all things, mixes rap and folk. The wallflowers and the other half come in on March 20, and March 23 belongs to an extraordinary slide-guitar player named warren haynes, who was last seen on tour with the Allman Brothers.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—One of those snazzy, awninged eateries you've seen nestled amid brownstones in the Village and always wondered about. The food is Italian, the atmosphere is pastels and soft lights, and the musicians, who set up in a room between the bar and the dining room, are first-rate. The **HILTON RUIZ** duo is in swing March 18-20, and guitarist **GENE BERTONCINI** and bassist **MICHAEL MOORE** begin a week's worth of dates on March 22. Closed Sundays.

EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

HAD the fourth annual Rainforest Benefit Concert been like the typical fund-raiser for this cause, it's not as if anyone would have been sorry they'd gone—after all, you're saving stuff, and that's the point, isn't it?—but no one would have gushed on about the details of the evening's proceedings, as everyone did this year. That's because, as well-meaning as these kinds of concerts are, their level of entertainment has usually been disconcertingly obtuse: the Grateful Dead's Bob Weir going languidly acoustic, an arrogant Sandra Bernhard desperately channeling Odetta, fusion-jazz trios (always a crowd-pleaser at a benefit), speeches by Yanoamö tribesmen, Madonna singing sort of half-assed (literally), or Fran Lebowitz introducing conservationists while emitting fresh clouds of cigarette smoke.

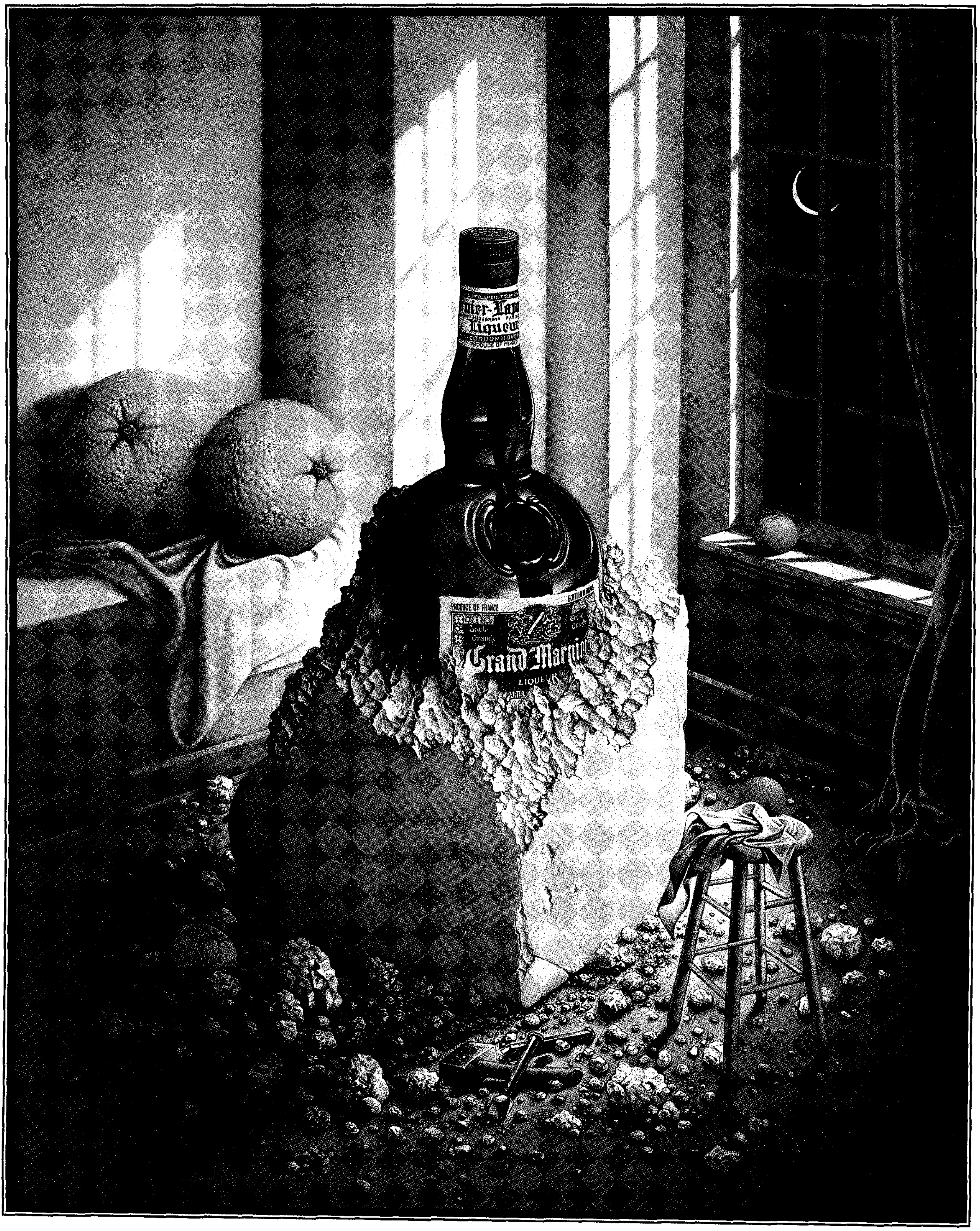
But whoever planned the Rainforest Benefit this year got "Big Chill" smart. Not only was the stage filled with retro performers—James Taylor, Tina Turner, Tom Jones (the evening's smash), and Herb Alpert—that this audience beamingly recalled from the days when they still went to concerts and thought *Rolling Stone* was hip, but somebody made sure that even the young guns, George Michael and Bryan Adams, sang from a song pool filled with American Bandstandards by Chuck Berry, Dion, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Otis Redding, and the Everly Brothers. "I love going to concerts when I know all the words," one middle-aged fashion powerhouse sighed. "The blond kid"—Adams—"he's good!" another enthusiastic boomer exclaimed. "He has an album?"

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

Five Lesbian Brothers—Maureen Angelos, Babs Davy, Dominique Dibbell, Peg Healey, and Lisa Kron present their new show, "Brave Smiles. . . Another Lesbian Tragedy." (One Dream, 232 West Broadway. 274-1450. March 17-21 at 7:30. Through March 28.)

"Everyday Newt Burman (The Trilogy of Cyclic-Existence)"—The most recent collaborative work by composer John Moran and the Ridge Theatre, a performance group. (La Mama Annex, 66 E. 4th St. 475-7710. March 18-21 at 7:30.)

Thomas Osha Pinnock—In "Reggae Boogie Talk Show." (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. March 18-21 at 7:30. Through March 28.)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ART

Bright Spark

THE painter Cora Cohen—ultimate daughter of Greenbergism as a Bennington student in the late sixties and early seventies—works both on and off the stretcher, observing her paintings at great length, altering and cropping them as she goes along. It is a languorously deliberate process, austere and disciplined but also sensuous in its devout reliance on sight, and it suggests a sensibility that is the opposite of that conveyed by almost everything on view in the current Whitney Biennial.

Cohen's new paintings (McCoy, 41 East 57th Street; through March 20) are her freest and strongest to date. Never much of a colorist per se, Cohen here enlivens a characteristically close, murky palette with shimmering metallics, such as graphite crumbs and copper powders ground into emulsion, and, here and there, curling shreds of iridescent fabric. The latter are of course found objects, in the Duchampian sense. Although Cohen's paintings are deliquescent and ethereal—and are nothing if not abstract—they also suggest the intense and implosive dynamism of the city.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Daumier Drawings," the first major exhibition devoted specifically to the drawings of Honoré Daumier (1808-79). Daumier was a working artist in the modern sense, a lithographer by trade and a savage pictorial satirist whose lampoons of King Louis-Philippe once landed him in jail. The current show contains more than a hundred of his caustic masterpieces, including "The Drunkenness of Silenus," "The Legislative Belly," and the saturnine "Doctor Prunelle." Through May 2. . . . ¶ The Greeks learned the art of stone-carving from the Egyptians, but they soon introduced innovations of their own—for instance, they discovered a way to make their statues entirely freestanding, as is demonstrated by several works in "The Greek Miracle: Classical Sculpture from the Dawn of Democracy." This remarkable exhibit of more than forty statues, stelae, busts, and figures, from the fifth century B.C., features such archetypal works as "The Kritios Boy," whose tilted head and pelvis give the figure a naturalistic asymmetry that represents a new conception of beauty. . . . ¶ "Faces and Figures: German and Austrian Artists, 1918-33" consists entirely of Met-owned objects. . . . ¶ Paintings from fifteenth-century China, in "Painters of the Great Ming: The Imperial Court and Zhe School." (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

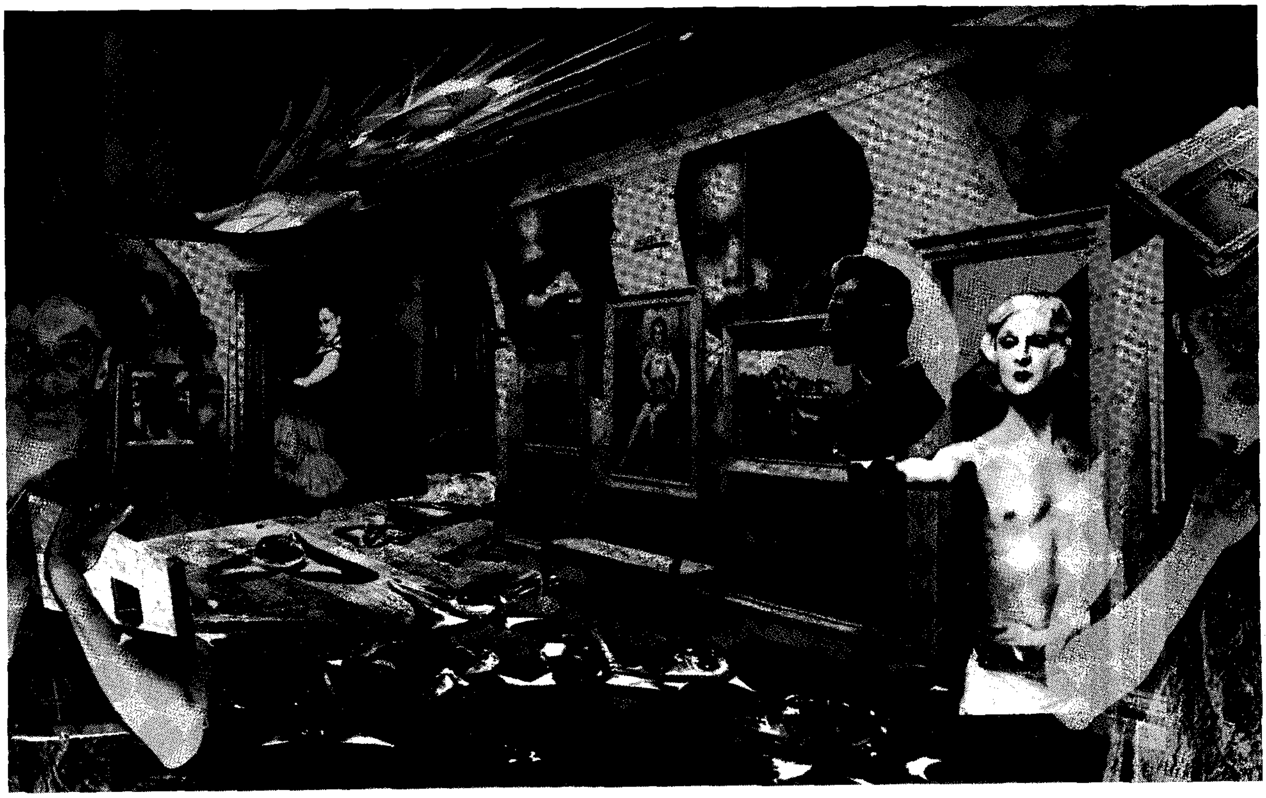
Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—"Max Ernst: Dada and the Dawn of Surrealism" comprises two hundred and thirty paintings, relief sculptures, collages, drawings, and prints. Through May 2. . . . ¶ "Thinking Is Form: The Drawings of Joseph Beuys." Approximately two hundred works, in pencil, watercolor, oil, collage, and chalk on blackboard. Through May 4. . . . ¶ "Recent Acquisitions: Photography" presents some thirty works—by Jan Groover, John Gutmann, and Doug and Mike Starn, among others—that reflect the diversity of the museum's collection. Through April 6. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Osmosis," a collaborative exhibition by sculptors Ettore Spalletti and Haim Steinbach. (Open daily, except Thursdays, 10 to 8.)

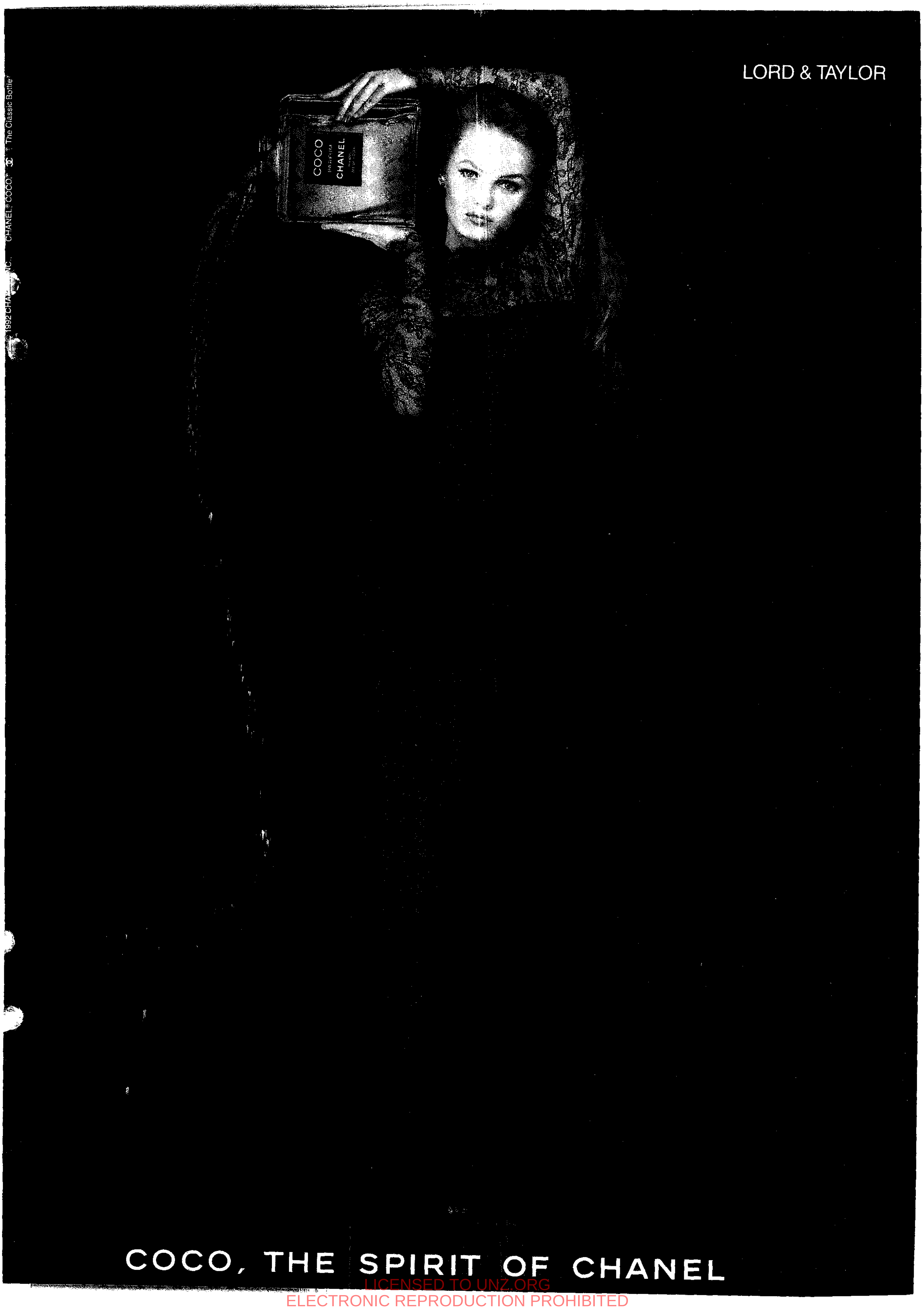
Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway—"Four Rooms and a House Ball: Pop and the Everyday Object" features the work of more than thirty Pop artists, including Jim Dine, Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, and James Rosenquist. . . . ¶ The downtown branch has recently become a veritable hot spot on the photography map, as is made clear by "Photography in Contemporary German Art: 1960 to the Present." Here one can see the stars of German art, side by side with names that will probably be new to most Americans. There's Conceptual work, straightforward work, and everything in between, from Pop to kitsch to images reflecting the postwar fixation on national identity. Through May 9. (Open daily, except Tuesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday through Saturday evenings until 10.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—Like one of those Russian *matrioshki,* this year's Biennial, featuring more than eighty American artists, is a show within a show within a show. You could spend days here if you were diligent about combing all the installations, reading all the texts, and watching all the videos—much of it eliciting a concern for sociopolitical issues. Better to go with the flow, and not ask whither. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—"Fancy Feet: A Historic Collection of Ladies' Footwear" presents a panorama of high heels, slippers, boots, and mules, and demonstrates how shoe design often reflects the times. The exhibit ranges from the sixteenth century (a pair of Italian platforms known as *chopines)* through the twentieth (Charles Jourdan's 1965 version of the patent-leather slingback). . . . ¶ Ida Applebroog's new installation, titled "Everything Is Fine," consists of a bunch of humdrum sketches on the back wall of the lobby, along with twenty-five freestanding paintings of chimpanzees. Toby Tyler would think he'd died and gone to Heaven, but nobody else is likely to be particularly moved. . . . ¶ An expanded installation of paintings, photographs, works on paper, and sculpture from the museum's permanent collection of contemporary art, inaugurating the renovated West Wing. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)



The 1993 Biennial Exhibition at the Whitney.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ART—Cont'd

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—"Amazon Portrait." Photographs of the elusive Tapirapé Indians of central Brazil. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—Thomas Jefferson had admirably legible penmanship, which makes the autograph letters and other documents here accessibility itself. And his lucid style is astonishing to ears accustomed to the inanities of modern bureaucrats. The exhibit also includes letters from Lafayette and Czar Alexander I, a copy of the first printing of the Declaration of Independence, and much more. Through April 18. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—"Is It Phyfe?" presents furniture by Scottish-born cabinetmaker Duncan Phyfe (1768-1854). (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—"Assault on the Arts: Culture and Politics in Nazi Germany" brings together assorted materials that illustrate the deleterious effects on art of the Nazi regime. Through May 28. . . . ¶ "Christian Boltanski: Books, Prints, Printed Matter, Ephemera" showcases the bleak oeuvre of this leading French Conceptualist. Through May 15. . . . ¶ "America Moves West: Images of an Expanding Nation." More than fifty drawings, watercolors, and photographs chronicling American migration in the nineteenth century. Through May 22. (Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5:45.)

Queens Museum of Art, Flushing Meadow Park—Ten works by Keith Haring—eight drawings, one sculpture, and a sixty-foot mural. . . . ¶ Images of, and references to, coin and currency over the past thirty years, in "The Realm of the Coin: Money in American Art, 1960-90," featuring the work of Laurie Anderson, J. S. G. Boggs, Mary Kelly, Andy Warhol, and David Wojnarowicz. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Carl Andre/Group Show—The single object in the show is an early minimalist sculpture, from 1965, that consists of pink Styrofoam beams stacked and arranged as the perimeter of a large square. It is a very satisfying work that explores issues of containment and exclusion, solidity and lightness with the greatest of ease. / A show of all sorts of drawings, from preparatory sketches to afterthoughts, by a group so hot you might swear you've seen this show before. Rosemarie Trockel's works don't communicate easily, while Matthew Barney's drawings have a meticulous and light touch (though their prosthetic frames are distracting bits of decorative affectation). Larry Clark's photo-assemblages of teen-age sexuality and drug abuse have become ubiquitous; while his individual images are still potent, his arrangements are becoming tiresome. The unexpected comes in Adrian Piper's group of beautiful and disturbing portraits done on job-application forms, which look like police composites once removed. Through March 25. (Cooper, 155 Wooster St.)

Tony Bevan—This British painter is no master of technique, but a number of these psychologically probing paintings are nonetheless haunting. Most are portraits of singing boys who seem prematurely old and sickly, as if they were on chemotherapy. The strongest work is a polyptych of a choir of singers against an orange-and-red ground—shocks of color in an otherwise colorless work. Also on view is a series of self-portraits, in all of which Bevan is enacting some sort of howl. Through March 20. (Louver, 130 Prince St.)

Robert Grosvenor—A strong and quietly intelligent sculpture consisting of a large elevated black ring made of fibreglass, a low cinder-block wall within and bisecting it, and a painted rolled-steel tube suspended above it from the top of the wall. The three components explore all sorts of sculptural elements (circle, line, shaft) and dynamic relations. The artist has used the gallery's one structural column as an integral part of the work. Through March 27. (Cooper, 149 Wooster St.)

Carter Kustera—In his previous show, this artist expressed the breakdown of the nuclear family by fashioning a life-size grouping of mother, father, brother, and sister out of wax and melting them with high-intensity lamps as they sat on the living-room sofa. In the current show, Kustera plunges with comical literal-mindedness into the notion of identity adrift, but he often tries too hard to be clever. One work features a grid of human heads buoyed by life preservers, a squad of men trying to keep their faces afloat. In another work, there's a head encased in what looks like a transparent bowling ball resting on a short length of track. Through March 27. (Baer, 476 Broome St.)

Marlene McCarty—Of the new feminist artists who have declared war on male sexual abusiveness, McCarty is the least likely to play the victim. In these works, such satirically macho lines as "I'll give you the biggest dick you've ever had" and "Bend over become salvation" are burned on the canvas by ironing, a kind of woman's work that, with its flattening heat, also suggests symbolic revenge. In a number of the paintings, the phrases are applied like minimalist motifs, in stripes that ride through the centers or out at the edges of the canvasses and refer to the stretcher bars that support them. But with most of the phrases, McCarty puts her avenging iron to psychedelic-flame letters that appropriate the aggressive male world of custom-car kits. Through March 27. (Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St.)

James Nares—Rarely has an artist done so much with so little. Nares has just one trick in his repertoire, but he performs it over and over again with consummate finesse: in a paradox of totally controlled freedom, he twists and turns a thick paint stroke as if it were Isadora Duncan herself onstage. Through March 20. (Kasmin, 74 Grand St.)

Joan Semmel—Through the years, Semmel has had difficulty making a place for herself outside the feminist art community, especially as she has taken on realist painting, a bastion of male conservatism in art. Her current show, ambitious as usual, depicts scenes of older women in the locker room, again illustrating the artist's desire to violate terrain associated with men's power. Semmel's greatest problem—and it's a big one—is that she is simply not an interesting painter. This is "bad" painting at its worst, lacking in simple pictorial intelligence while loaded with sloppy expressionistic touches. Through March 28. (Bypass, 578 Broadway.)

Judith Shea—This underappreciated artist seems to be back near the top of her talents in four carved-wood sculptures that use monumental statues to explore issues of antimonumentality. Three depict women posed on pedestals, where men would be expected to stand, and there's one of an angelic man on a horse, a work whose rustic material transforms the Roman civic ideal of the conquering hero. Standing by itself is a bronze of a strong, purposeful woman on a pedestal that is labelled simply "Artist." Through March 20. (Protech, 560 Broadway.)

Not Vital—A handsome installation of plops of cow dung cast in bronze and scattered across the floor. Vital's work is being sold for the benefit of young burn victims in Kathmandu. Through April 3. (Wooster Gardens, 40 Wooster St.)

Group Show—The Drawing Center's annual "Selections" shows, featuring drawings and

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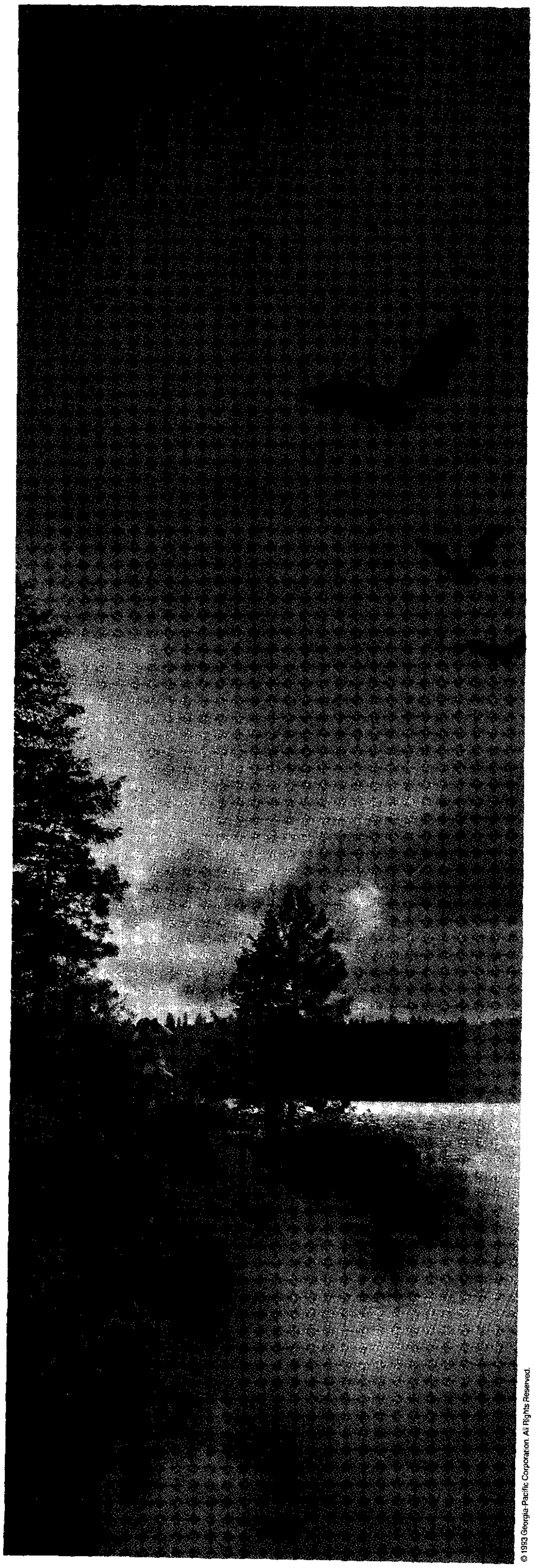
"I think it's commitment that's going to make a difference. I mean, it's a matter of all of us just doing what's right. All of us. I work for Georgia-Pacific. A forest products company. And they feel the same way I do. At the mill where I work, for example, we've set strict environmental standards that a lot of times go beyond the government's. Nobody said we had to. We just thought it was our responsibility. That kind of commitment is important to me. And to our environment."

Patricia Runner

Patricia Runner
Technician

Georgia-Pacific



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other works on paper by comparatively unknown artists, used to be terrible, but of late they have been consistently attractive displays. The current one features six individual artists and one collaborative duo. Especially interesting are Siobhan Liddell's watercolors; Drew Beattie and Daniel Davidson's pictures of daily life, which are interrupted by some magical images; and Roland Flexner's small graphite drawings, which are of two types: tender, realistic depictions of aging and death, and schematic, nervously controlled renderings of arms and legs, cropped to make the limbs' actions seem, variously, violent and sexual. Through March 27. (35 Wooster St. Open Wednesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—vito acconci: 303 Gallery, 89 Greene St. Through March 20. . . . **marco bagnoli:** Marcus, 578 Broadway. Through April 3. . . . **forrest bess** and **john lees:** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 420 West Broadway. Through March 20. . . . **joseph beuys:** Gibson, 568 Broadway. Through April 3. . . . **carroll dunham:** Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway Through March 20. . . . **robert harms:** Klarfeld Perry, 472 Broome St. Through March 27. . . . **jene highstein:** Klein, 594 Broadway. Through May 9. . . . **david rabinowitch:** Flynn, 113 Crosby St. Through April 30. . . . **robert reid:** Kelly, 591 Broadway. Through March 30. . . . **ann schaumburger:** Eno, 594 Broadway. Through March 25. . . . **marjorie strider:** Zarre, 154 Wooster St. Through April 3. . . . **william willis:** Littlejohn-Sternau, 133 Greene St. Through March 27. . . . **tino zago:** O.K. Harris, 383 West Broadway. Through March 27.

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Juan Munoz/Thomas Struth—A dramatic-looking, rather mute installation that includes three of the artist's signature bronze Humpty-Dumpty floor figures; a sculptural relief, set into a wall, that is redolent of the pictographic tradition of the Latin-American modernist school; and a curtain-like progression of vague grisaille paintings. / A substantial group of photographs by Struth—most in black-and-white, with three in color subtly interspersed—taken in Berlin and in various grandly dolorous former East German towns. Struth's prints are stately, encompassing, and dispassionate, and they seem to pay tribute to the shabbiness lingering in the wake of the industrial age. Through March 20. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Short List—marcel broodthaers: Werner, 21 E. 67th St. Through April 17. . . . **robert cottingham:** Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St. Through March 20. . . . **tibor csernus:** Stiebel Modern, 32 E. 57th St. Through April 17. . . . **herbert ferber:** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. Through April 3. . . . **helen frankenthaler** and **robert caracciolo:** Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. Through March 20. . . . **nancy fried** and **bryn jayes:** Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. Through March 27. . . . **adam fuss** and **roberto juarez:** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. Through March 27. . . . **yves klein:** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. Through April 17. . . . **catherine lee:** Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. Through March 27. . . . **jack levine:** Midtown-Payson, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Through April 17. . . . **alice trumbull mason:** Washburn, 20 W. 57th St. Through March 27. . . . **george nick** and **susan shatter:** Fishbach, 24 W. 57th St. Through March 27. . . . **arnulf rainer:** Blum Helman, 20 W. 57th St. Through March 20. . . . **harold reddicliffe:** Tatistcheff, 50 W. 57th St. Through March 20. (Open Mondays). . . . **larry rivers:** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. Through March 27. (Open Mondays). . . . **harry roseman:** Davis & Langdale, 231 E. 60th St. Through March 27. . . . **theodoros stamos:** ACA, 41 E. 57th St. Through March 27. . . . **timothy woodman:** Zabriskie, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Through March 20.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Devil's Advocate

The exquisite show of vintage prints by Brassaï—most of them from the thirties, all of them taken in Paris, and some of them by now very famous—has been putting life onto the walls of the sparkling new Houk Friedman space (851 Madison Avenue at 70th Street; through May 1) for over a week. But the day before the place opened there was still construction going on and a palpable "will it be ready in time?" excitement in the air.

One person who seemed very calm, however, and rather bemused by New York optimism, was Gilberte Brassaï, the photographer's wife, just arrived from Paris. She and Brassaï spent more than ten years together, until his death in 1984 at the age of eighty-five, and in her memory reside the details that give color to this figure whose importance as a pioneer is a black-and-white fact of photography. For instance, she talks about how Brassaï, who most of the time didn't have an agent, would deal with the problem of his subjects' vanity: he'd say, "Never give them a print until ten years after you took the picture, and then they'll be happy with how they look."

Mme. Brassaï doesn't mince words when it comes to the unfair typecasting of her husband for his unforgettable pictures of prostitutes and young lovers, homosexual bars and other night spots: "He was thought of as the Devil, as a dirty photographer." Describing a show of Brassaï's in New York in 1976, she laughs and recalls, "A woman fainted right in front of one of the pictures!" Isn't that what photography should be like more often—so good that we pass out?

Lewis Baltz—These seemingly ordinary images reflect life in a world where industrialization and technology are givens. The photographs were all shot at night in Italian cities, but far from capturing the picturesque glories of ancient Europe, they instead give us parking lots, intersections, and billboards set against fiery red backgrounds, punctuated with bursts of light as visceral as fireworks. Through March 20. (Janet Borden, 560 Broadway.)

Short List—keith carter: Witkin, 415 West Broadway. Through April 10. . . . **walker evans:** 292 Gallery, 120 Wooster St. Through April 10. . . . **emil heilborn:** Mann, 42 E. 76th St. Through April 10. . . . **roman vishniac:** International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. Through April 18. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8. . . . **joel-peter witkin:** Pace-MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. Through April 24.

Christa Ludwig at Carnegie Hall.

MUSIC

One More Time

Christa Ludwig's recitals have been a treasurable part of New York concert life for many years, and there was much sadness among lovers of German song when it was announced that her Carnegie Hall appearance of March 20 is to be her last concert here. (She is scheduled to sing a few final operatic performances later in the season.) In another era, a diva's farewell was a long-running comedy, with absolute farewells, positively last appearances, even publicized contracts binding the artist *not* to do subsequently what everyone was so eager to pay to hear her do one last time.

Nobody expects Christa Ludwig to carry on like that, but one could wish for it. The literature of song built up from Mozart to Berg is a world of wonders, and Ms. Ludwig has lived in it. The musical world feels a special love for older artists who are that much closer to the time when that literature was still new—who in their own youth worked with senior artists who in turn had known Brahms, or sung under Strauss or Mahler. Nostalgia, perhaps. One has the sense that James Levine—fifteen years younger than Ms. Ludwig—feels something like nostalgia when he accompanies her, as he has done often over the years and will do at the Carnegie concert. Their program is Brahms, Mahler, Schumann, Wolf, and Strauss.

(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera House is 362-6000; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall, 247-7800; and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**cavalleria rusticana** and **pagliacci**, with Stefka Evstatieva, Kristjan Johannsson, and Frederick Burchinal in the former, and Diana Soviero, Placido Domingo, and Matteo Manuguerra in the latter; conducted by Nello Santi. (March 17 at 8.). . . With Juan Pons as Tonio. (March 20 at 8.). . . **la traviata**, with Tiziana Fabbricini, Franco Farina, and Juan Pons; Placido Domingo. (March 18 at 8.). . . With Neil Rosenshein as Alfredo. (March 22 at 8.). . . **la fanciulla del west**, with Ghena Dimitrova, Nicola Martinucci, and Sherrill Milnes; Christian Badea. (March 19 at 8.). . . **ariadne auf naxos**, in a new production, with Jessye Norman, Ruth Ann Swenson, Susanne Mentzer, Thomas Moser, and Thomas Stewart; Ion Marin. (March 20 at 1:30 and March 23 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House.)

Pre-Ring Circus—Though the Metropolitan's performances of Wagner's "Der Ring des Nibelungen" won't begin until next week, intrepid tetralogiophiles who simply can't wait may catch scenes from the "Ring"—along with bits of "Lohengrin" and abridgments of Mozart's "Mitridate" and Humperdinck's "Hansel and Gretel," depending on the evening—as sung by the aspiring Wagnerians of the Third Street Music School Settlement. (235 E. 11th St. March 18-20 at 6. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ Also by way of prep work, a lecture by Elise Kirk on the first American performances of the "Ring," which occurred in 1889; sponsored by the Wagner Society of New York. (Liederkranz Foundation, 6 E. 87th St. March 19 at 7:30. Tickets at the door on the night of the lecture.)

"The Bundle Man"—A new chamber opera with music by Marshall Coid to a libretto by Ilsa Gilbert; conducted by Mimi Stern-Wolfe and directed by Tom O'Horgan. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 254-1109. March 18-21 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall. Kurt Masur tries out the programs the orchestra will perform on its European tour, which begins on March 22. March 17 at 6:45: Strauss's "Till Eulenspiegel" and Dvořák's Symphony No. 9 (the "New World"). . . . ¶ March 18 at 8: Britten's "Simple Symphony," Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante (K. 364, featuring violinist Glenn Dicterow and violist Cynthia Phelps), and Dvořák's Symphony No. 9. . . . ¶ March 19 at 8: Barber's Adagio for Strings, Bright Sheng's "H'un (Lacerations): In Memoriam 1966-1976," and Brahms' Symphony No. 2.

Manhattan School of Music Symphony—Glen Cortese conducts Cage's Suite for Toy Piano, Larry Widdoes' "The Visitors," Aaron Kernis's "Dream of the Morning Sky," and Corigliano's Symphony No. 1. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. March 19 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

New York Pops—Skitch Henderson conducts music by Gershwin and others, with soprano Maureen McGovern. (Carnegie Hall. March 19 at 8.)

Soloists of Montpellier-Moscow—A conductorless ensemble of twenty Russian soloists who spend a good deal of time in the South of France, here performing symphonic works by Mozart, Barber, and Tchaikovsky, as well as Haydn's C-Major Cello Concerto (featuring Julian Lloyd Webber). (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. March 21 at 2. For information about tickets, call 586-4680.)

Orchestra of St. Luke's—Roger Norrington conducts an all-Haydn program, focussing on works that were presented during the composer's sojourns in London in the seventeen-nineties; including the Symphonies No. 92 (the "Oxford") and No. 99, the "Scena di Berenice" and a handful of songs (featuring soprano Nancy Argenta), and the "March for the Prince of Wales." (Avery Fisher Hall. March 21 at 3.)

American Composers Orchestra—Paul Lustig Dunkel conducts the world première of Sheila Silver's "Three Preludes for Orchestra," the New York premières of Leo Ornstein's "Nocturne" and Bruce MacCombie's "Leaden Echo, Golden Echo" (the latter with soprano Sarah Reese), and Schuman's Symphony No. 9. (Carnegie Hall. March 21 at 3, preceded at 1:45 by a pre-concert roundtable, open to ticketholders, in which Ms. Silver and Mr. MacCombie will participate.)

Choral Symphony Society—David Labovitz directs the choir and orchestra in Bach's Cantatas No. 21, No. 25, and No. 71, on the composer's Birthday No. 307. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. March 21 at 3. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the concert.)

Choir of Trinity Church—Owen Burdick directs Bach's B-Minor Mass, with a period-instrument orchestra. (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. 602-0873. March 21 at 4.)

Central City Chorus—Charles Pilling directs music by Poulenc (including his "Litanies à la Vierge Noire"), Villa-Lobos, and Ginastera. (Central Presbyterian Church, Park Ave. at 64th St. March 21 at 7. Tickets at the door on the evening of the concert.)

Ascension Music Chorus and Orchestra—Dennis Keene directs Schubert's G-Major Mass, music by Mendelssohn (some of it for double chorus), motets by Bruckner, and Schoenberg's "Friede auf Erden." (Church of the Ascension, Fifth Ave. at 10th St. 254-8553. March 21 at 8.)

New York City Gay Men's Chorus—Gary Miller directs music from the movies; guests include Jim Bailey, Stockard Channing, Daisy Eagan, Sharon McNight, and Marni Nixon. A benefit concert. (Carnegie Hall. March 21 at 8.)

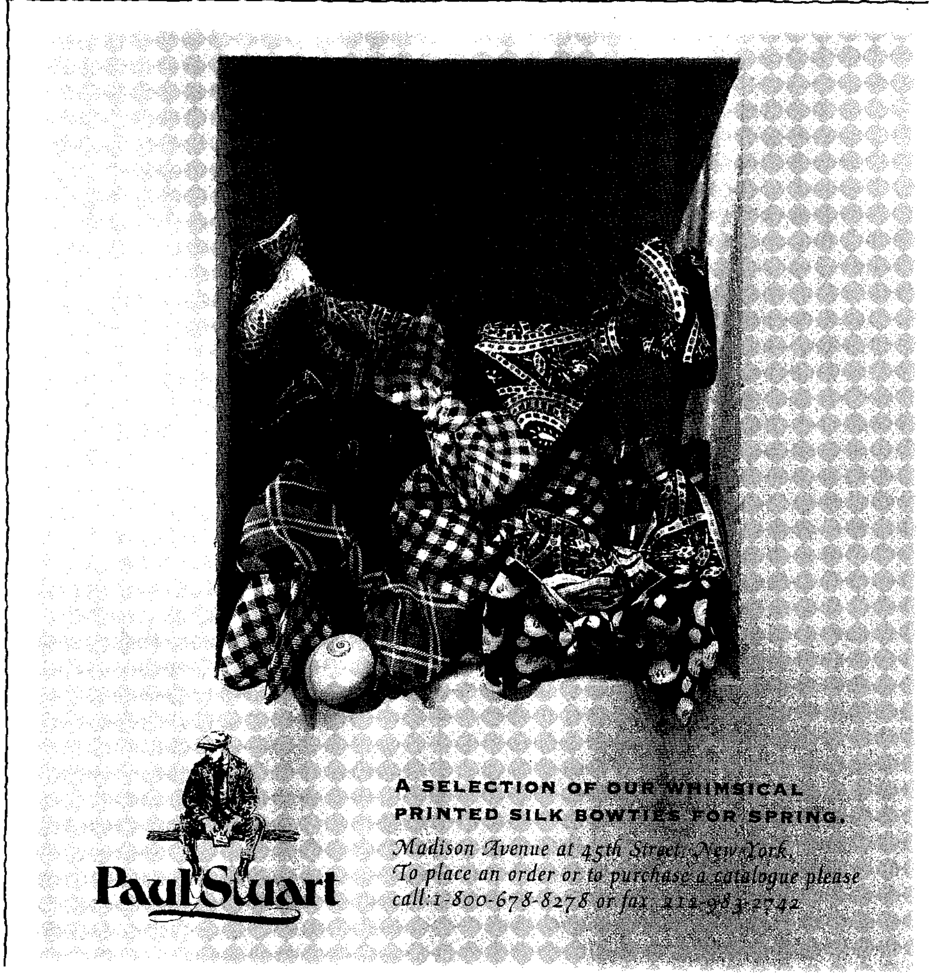
Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra—Jesús López-Cobos conducts Shostakovich's "Festive Overture," Bartók's Violin Concerto No. 2 (with Viktoria Mullova), and Sibelius's Symphony No. 1. (Carnegie Hall. March 22 at 8.)

Cincinnati Pops Orchestra—Finally, somebody gets around to performing the "Künstler-Quadrille" (Op. 201) by Johann Strauss, Jr., a delightful potpourri of referential (though far from reverential) allusions to many a standard-repertoire classic: what P. D. Q. Bach might have written had he lived during the Second Empire. Erich Kunzel conducts it here, on a program that will also range through bits of Offenbach, oodles of vaguely popular tunes, and a medley of sea chanteys; with the United States Navy Sea Chanters and trumpeter Doc Severinsen. (Carnegie Hall. March 23 at 8.)

RECITALS

Four Nations Ensemble—The period-instrument ensemble performs lesser-known works by Haydn: his G-Minor Piano Trio, his solo cantata "Arianna a Naxos," an excerpt from the string-quartet version of the "Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross," a chamber transcription of the "Military" Symphony, and (also in the military vein) several of his "Scottish Songs"; with mezzo-soprano Judith Malafronte. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 17 at 8.)

Foss Fest—Apart from his activities as a composer, Lukas Foss championed contemporary music as musical director of the Buffalo Philharmonic, the Milwaukee Symphony, and, from 1971 to 1991, the Brooklyn Philharmonic. Several seventieth-birthday tributes had already been scheduled for this season before Mr. Foss learned, last summer, that he had been under a misapprehension all his life: he had been born not in 1922, as he had always understood, but rather in 1923. This celebratory concert therefore precedes his seventieth birthday by nearly half a year (it will fall on August 15). Eight noted chamber musicians (including Mr. Foss, at the piano), will perform seven of his works, ranging from his first piece (reportedly written when he was fourteen—or was he really thirteen?) to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his most recent vocal composition. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. March 17 at 8.)

New Music Consort—An exploration of works by the late John Cage, including the U.S. première of his "Fourteen." (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. March 17 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

András Schiff—Initiating his six-concert cycle of Schubert's piano sonatas. March 17 at 8: The Sonatas in E Minor (D. 566), in C Major (D. 840), and in A Minor (D. 845). . . . March 20 at 8: The Sonatas in C Major (D. 279), in A Minor (D. 784), and in D Major (D. 850). (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. The series continues through April 3. . . . **NOTE:** On March 21, from 1 to 9, Mr. Schiff will participate in a daylong discussion, open to the public, about Schubert and the piano.)

Bargemusic—Pianist James Winn performs several Scarlatti sonatas in minor keys; Hamao Fujiwara joins him for Stravinsky's Divertimento (1932); and cellist Jian Wang completes the ensemble for Schubert's Piano Trio in B-Flat. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. March 18 at 7:30 and March 21 at 4.)

Beaux Arts Trio—Performing trios by Haydn and Brahms (his Second), plus Fauré's C-Minor Piano Quartet (with violist Steven Tenenbom). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. March 19-20 at 8.)

Music from Japan Festival—At the Asia Society. March 19 at 8: Works by Akira Miyoshi (preceded at 7 by a lecture by the composer, open to ticketholders). . . . ¶ March 20 at 5: Percussionist Sumire Yoshihara and colleagues. . . . ¶ March 21 at 2:30: Works by Somei Satoh and Shigeaki Saegusa, for sangen, voice, and koto. . . . ¶ March 21 at 4: A tribute to John Cage, including a screening of Takahiko Iimura's film "Ma: Space/Time in the Garden of Ryoanji." . . ¶ March 21 at 5: A symposium, moderated by John Schaefer, on "The Legacy of John Cage in Japan." (Park Ave. at 70th St. 517-2742.)

June Anderson and Alfredo Kraus—The soprano and the tenor perform arias and duets; with Michelangelo Veltri conducting the New York City Opera Orchestra. (Avery Fisher Hall. March 20 at 8.)

Christa Ludwig—The mezzo-soprano bids farewell to New York's concert stages by way of a Liederabend of works by Brahms, Mahler, Schumann, Wolf, and Strauss; with pianist James Levine. (Carnegie Hall. March 20 at 8.)

Juilliard String Quartet—Performing Haydn's C-Major Quartet (Op. 74, No. 1) and (with the help of violist Michael Tree) a pair of quintets, by Bruckner and Dvořák. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. March 21 at 3.)

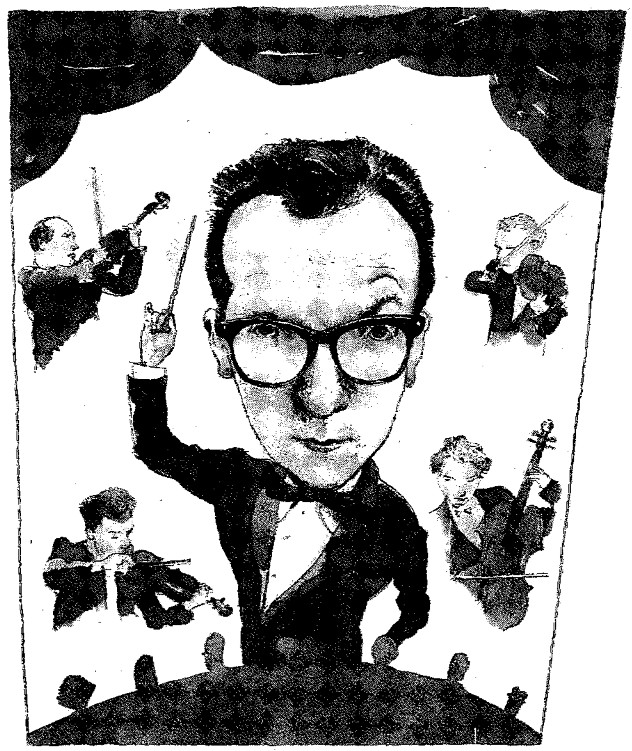
Manhattan String Quartet—The ensemble perseveres through its season-long survey of Shostakovich's quartets; No. 10, No. 11, and No. 12 constitute this installment. (Walter Reade Theatre, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. March 22 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

Dawn Upshaw and Malcolm Bilson—The soprano and the fortepianist chart the early history of the German lied, performing songs by Carl Friedrich Zelter (whose song-settings Goethe is said to have preferred to Schubert's), Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. (Merkin Concert Hall. March 22 at 8.)

Barros Classical Consort—Guitarist Dennis Cinelli joins the period-instrument group in a program that includes chamber works by Mozart, Hummel, Mauro Giuliani, and Stephen Storace (the younger). (Clark Studio Theatre at the Lincoln Center Institute, Rose Building, 70 Lincoln Center Plaza. March 22 at 8. For information about tickets, call 757-3892.)

Juliette Kang—Violinist, performing Schubert's D-Major Sonatina, sonatas by Bartók and Schumann (in A Minor), and Szymanowski's "Notturno e Tarantella"; with pianist Robert Koenig. Presented by Young Concert Audiences. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. March 23 at 8.)

Andrew Rangell—The pianist performs Sweelinck's Variations on "Mein junges Leben hat ein End'," Bach's Partitas No. 4 and No. 6, Nielsen's Chaconne, Enescu's "Carillon Nocturne," and Stravinsky's Piano Sonata (1924). (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. March 23 at 8.)



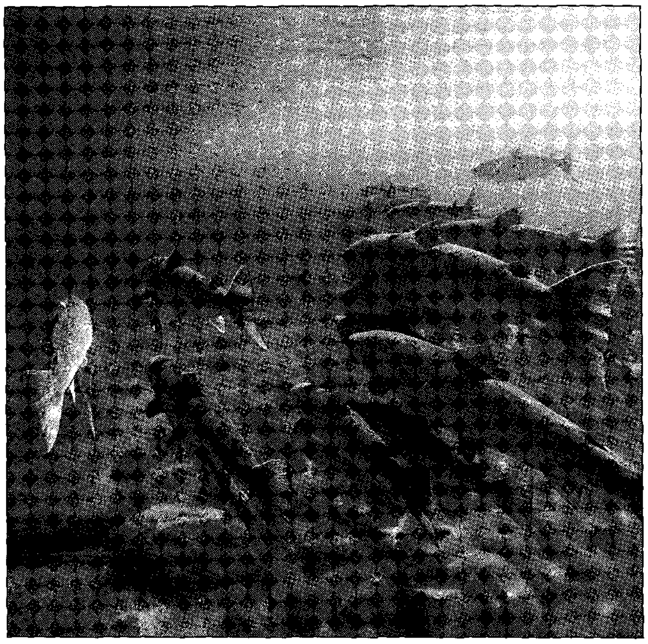
Elvis Costello and the Brodsky Quartet at Town Hall.

JAZZ/POP/ROCK
PERSONAL APPEARANCES

Elvis Costello and the Brodsky Quartet—This brilliant songwriter reached an impressive pop apotheosis with "King of America" (March 1986) and "Blood and Chocolate" (October 1986). But despite the epic lyricism of the former album and the Lennon-like ferocity of the latter, Costello seemed to have gone as far as he could go as a rock star. Now well into his difficult middle period, he has collaborated with a London-based classical group, the Brodsky Quartet, on a song cycle called "The Juliet Letters." As it turns out, it *does* mean a thing if it ain't got that swing—but not quite what one hopes for. Still, there are several wonderful interludes in the generally thin and lachrymose score of this new collection. And the living Elvis's onstage intensity should not be underestimated.

WHY SAVE WILD SALMON?

For the past twenty years, our nation's people have been committed to cleaning our rivers, the arteries of the continent, and bringing them back to life. We can be proud that wild fish can once again breathe in Eastern rivers whose fumes once peeled paint from nearby houses, and that funding a new dam regardless of merit is no longer the Western senator's rite of passage into largesse and clout.



But thoughtful citizens should know what until now has concerned mostly biologists and anglers. If we don't act soon, wild salmon will go the way of the buffalo. They are in trouble the world over, including the United States. Only a few spawn in Eastern rivers; and in the once prolific Northwest, salmon are now declining at an astonishing rate.

The loss of wild salmon alone would be incalculable – in any of the ways that count – yet more than salmon may be lost. What kills wild salmon threatens other sea-run species, including striped bass, steelhead, sturgeon and shad. And in the Northwest, where salmon are seen as a barometer of environmental pressures, biologists are especially alarmed: what's killing wild salmon is degrading the ecosystem as a whole.

Wild salmon do not have to die out, nor do any sea-run fish. They *can* survive in American rivers, east or west. And we know what will save them: clean water, curbs on overfishing, access to spawning grounds, and elimination of grazing, agricultural, logging and construction practices that erode streambanks.

But arguably the greatest threat to wild salmon and other sea-run species comes from dams that flood and block access to spawning grounds, from excessive releases that raise water temperature and kill fish, from turbine blades that grind up young salmon making their way back to the sea.

In many rivers, dams and wild salmon must coexist, and the efforts to manage this coexistence are necessarily complex and expensive. Yet elsewhere we overlook a better solution.

We have been damming our rivers since the Industrial Revolution and the opening of the West. A number of our dams are abandoned and many more have become marginal. It's time to identify, and remove, those dams whose harm outweighs their benefit.

Please support two innovative efforts to save wild salmon, remove dams, and restore balance – on the Kennebec River in Maine and the Rogue River in Oregon – as examples of what can and should be done elsewhere in the country.

To receive written information from the Kennebec Coalition or the Oregon Natural Resources Council or a listing of the many local and national groups working to save wild salmon, please call Patagonia at (800) 336-9090.

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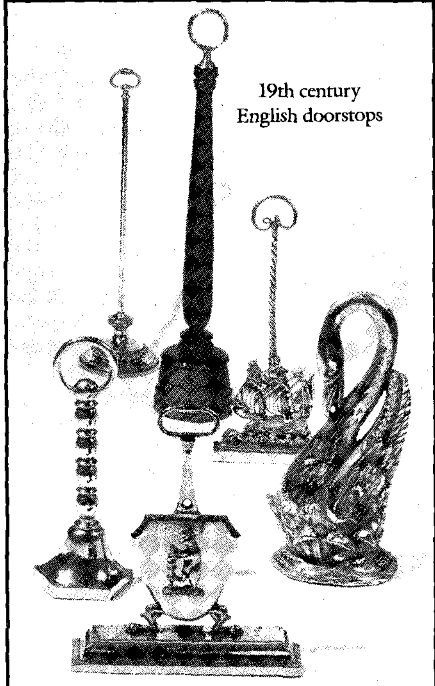

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MUSIC—Cont'd

(Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. March 18 at 8.)

Suicidal Tendencies—Hardcore thrash punk from a band that embodies many of the endearing qualities of both the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Nirvana. Singer Mike Muir's intelligent anguish is inspiring and frightful, and the band's 1992 album, "The Art of Rebellion," was an overlooked gem. Warning: a slam-dancing alert will be in effect during this show, and there will be moshing in the pit. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. March 18 at 8.)

James Brown—The Godfather of Soul, the man who put the hop in hip, the grateful exponent of the rehabilitative effects of incarceration, and one of the great American popular artists will celebrate his new album, "Universal James," which was released last week. Say it loud! (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. March 19 at 8.)

James Brown at Radio City.

John King—Presenting his "Bigfunk" project/concert, which is described as "fat grooves with big noise and fast changes." Participants include the spooky, noise-making guitarist Marc Ribot, as well as Roy Nathanson and Curtis Fowlkes. (Thread Waxing Space, 476 Broadway. 966-9520. March 19 at 9.)

The Chieftains—Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. March 17 at 8.

"Jazz from Japan"—Terumasa and Motohiko Hino, Benisuke Sakai, and Freddie Hubbard. (Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. 752-3015. March 18 at 8.)

Masters of India and Pakistan—L. Subramaniam, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, and Zakir Hussain. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. March 20 at 8.)

"Lulu: A 'Hard Bop' Opera"—Excerpts from a work by Lee Breuer and Jon Faddis. This concert version is performed by Mr. Faddis and his trio, and others. (St. Ann's Church, 157 Montague St., Brooklyn. 1-718 858-2424. March 20 at 8.)

Sade—With Me Phi Me. (Paramount, Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. March 22-24 at 8.)

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

Knicks—Vs. the San Antonio Spurs, March 21 at noon.

Nets—Vs. the Atlanta Hawks, March 17 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Milwaukee Bucks, March 19 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Dallas Mavericks, March 21 at 7.

Rangers—Vs. the Edmonton Oilers, March 17. . . . ¶ Vs. the San Jose Sharks, March 19. (Game time, 7:30.)

Devils—Vs. the Edmonton Oilers, March 18 at 7:35. . . . ¶ Vs. the Quebec Nordiques, March 20 at 2:05. . . . ¶ Vs. the Tampa Bay Lightning, March 23 at 7:35.

(The Knicks and the Rangers play at Madison Square Garden, 465-6000; and the Nets and the Devils at the Meadowlands Arena, 1-201 935-3900.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Eggs-actly—The eighteenth annual "Eggs on End: Standing on Ceremony" demonstration will mark the vernal equinox, March 20 at 9:41 A.M. Participants, led by the unofficial commissioner of public spirit, Donna Henes, should be able to stand eggs straight up, thereby, according to Chinese tradition, assuring themselves a year of good luck. Three hundred and sixty eggs will be provided; extras are welcome. Afterward, there will be coffee, rolls, and, naturally, eggs, grilled on the spot. (Battery Park City esplanade, Hudson River Park, at the south end of Vesey St. No tickets necessary.)

Get Green—What's better than one parade? *Two* parades. This year, there will be a choice on St. Patrick's Day. One is sponsored by the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organization, whose members were not permitted to march as a group in the other, which is sponsored by the Ancient Order of Hibernians. From 9 to about 10:45: The former will begin in front of the Plaza Hotel (Fifth Avenue at 59th St.) and proceed down Fifth Avenue to 42nd St. . . . ¶ From 11 to about 5:30: The traditional St. Patrick's Day parade, which has been in existence since 1762, will follow its usual route up Fifth Avenue, from 44th St. to 86th St., then east to Third Avenue.

Free Verses—Ever since he published "For Love: Poems, 1950-1960," Robert Creeley has been finding fruitful ways of using tentativeness and indirection to fashion poems of a striking permanency and inevitability. He will be joined by Gerald Burns. Both will read from their own poetry. (Alliance Stage, 197 East Broadway, at Jefferson St. March 21 at 4. No tickets necessary.)

Readings—March 18 at 7: Poets Robert Schultz and Matthew Sweeney will read from their own work. (Nicholas Roerich Museum, 319 W. 107th St. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ March 18 at 7:30: Larry Kramer and others in a benefit reading. (Paula Cooper gallery, 155 Wooster St. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.). . . ¶ March 22 at 7:30: Astronomer Timothy Ferris will read from his most recent book, "The Mind's Sky: Human Intelligence in a Cosmic Context." (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 645-5848.). . . ¶ March 22 at 8: Philip Roth will read from his novel "Patrimony." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Av at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

Talks—March 17 at 6: A.C.L.U. president Nadine Strossen will give a talk titled "Feminism and Free Speech." (Hunter College School of Social Work, 129 E. 79th St. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ March 23 at 6: Crime novelist James Ellroy will give a talk titled "Social History as Crime." (New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. 930-0571.)

Weekend Walks—March 20 at 11: Eye on Art Tours fixes its gaze on Tribeca artists' studios. For more information, call 877-5117. . . . ¶ March 21 at 1: The Lower East Side Tenement Museum will lead a tour called "A Woman's Place." For more information, call 431-0233.

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN "MOVIES IN BRIEF," STARTING ON PAGE 28.

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)
Theatre 1: "Enchanted April" (directed by Mike Newell), with Joan Plowright.
Theatre 2: "The Crying Game" (†).
Theatre 3: "Mac" (John Turturro).
Theatre 4: "Strictly Ballroom" (†).
Theatre 5: "Like Water for Chocolate" (Alfonso Arau; a Mexican film, in Spanish).
Theatre 6: "Bad Lieutenant" (Abel Ferrara).

Little Theatre, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
Through March 21: "Modigliani" (1957, Jacques Becker; in French), with Gérard Philipe.
March 22: Theatre closed.
From March 23: "Jit" (Michael Raeburn).

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: "Sommersby" (Jon Amiel).
Theatre 2: "Passion Fish" (†).
Theatre 3: Through March 18: "Best of the Best 2" (Robert Radler). From March 19: "Point of No Return" (John Badham).

Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th. (982-0400)
Theatre 1: "El Mariachi" (†).
Theatre 2: "Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey" (†).
Theatre 3: "Fire in the Sky" (Robert Lieberman), with D. B. Sweeney.
Theatre 4: "Falling Down" (†).
Theatre 5: "A Far Off Place" (Mikael Salomon).
Theatre 6: Through March 18: "Falling Down" (†). From March 19: "Just Another Girl on the I.R.T" (†).
Theatre 7: "Groundhog Day" (†).

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th. (924-3363)
Through March 18: "Close to Eden" (Nikita Mikhalkov, in Russian and Mongolian).
From March 19: "Last Call at Maud's" (Paris Poirier).

Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th. (529-6799)
Theatre 1: "The Last Days of Chez Nous" (†).
Theatre 2: "Swing Kids" (Thomas Carter).
Theatre 3: "Damage" (Louis Malle).
Theatre 4: "Aladdin," an animated film; and (evenings only) "Shadow of the Wolf" (†).
Theatre 5: "Howards End" (†).
Theatre 6: "Amos & Andrew" (†).
Theatre 7: "Unforgiven" (†).

19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)
Theatre 1: "Fire in the Sky" (Robert Lieberman).
Theatre 2: "Amos & Andrew" (†).
Theatre 3: "Swing Kids" (Thomas Carter).
Theatre 4: "Sommersby" (Jon Amiel).
Theatre 5: "Ethan Frome" (John Madden).
Theatre 6: "Unforgiven" (†).

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
"Peter's Friends" (Kenneth Branagh), with Branagh; and "Flirting" (John Duigan).

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
"Amos & Andrew" (†).

Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)
Theatre 1: "CB4" (Tamra Davis).
Theatre 2: "Swing Kids" (Thomas Carter).
Theatre 3: "Untamed Heart" (†).
Theatre 4: "A Far Off Place" (Mikael Salomon).

34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: "Fire in the Sky" (Robert Lieberman).
Theatre 2: "Groundhog Day" (†).
Theatre 3: "Love Field" (Jonathan Kaplan), with Michelle Pfeiffer.

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"Mad Dog and Glory" (†).

Sutton I and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Theatre 1: "The Crying Game" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Crying Game" (†).

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
"Passion Fish" (†).

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
"Malcolm X" (†).

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: "Best of the Best 2."
Theatre 2: "CB4" (Tamra Davis).

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
"Aladdin," an animated film; and "Lorenzo's Oil" (George Miller).

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: "Amos & Andrew" (†).
Theatre 2: "Mad Dog and Glory" (†).

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: "A Far Off Place" (Mikael Salomon).
Theatre 2: "Swing Kids" (Thomas Carter).
Theatre 3: "Howards End" (†).

First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd. (752-4600)
Theatre 1: "Strictly Ballroom" (†).
Theatre 2: "Groundhog Day" (†).
Theatre 3: "A Few Good Men" (Rob Reiner).
Theatre 4: "Untamed Heart" (†).
Theatre 5: "Groundhog Day" (†).
Theatre 6: "Scent of a Woman" (†).

Gemini I and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: Through March 18: "Shadow of the Wolf" (†). From March 19: "Point of No Return."
Theatre 2: "Sommersby" (Jon Amiel).

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
"Rich in Love" (†).

New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: "Falling Down" (†).
Theatre 2: "Fire in the Sky" (Robert Lieberman).

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
"The Last Days of Chez Nous" (†).

Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"Ethan Frome" (John Madden), with Liam Neeson.

East 85th Street, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
"Fire in the Sky" (Robert Lieberman).

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: "Amos & Andrew" (†).
Theatre 2: "Scent of a Woman" (†).

Orpheum VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (876-2400)
Theatre 1: "Groundhog Day" (†).
Theatre 2: Through March 18: "Best of the Best 2" (Robert Radler). From March 19: "Just Another Girl on the I.R.T" (†).
Theatre 3: "Swing Kids" (Thomas Carter).
Theatre 4: "Mad Dog and Glory" (†).
Theatre 5: "Untamed Heart" (†).
Theatre 6: "Falling Down" (†).
Theatre 7: "Sommersby" (Jon Amiel).

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: "CB4" (Tamra Davis).
Theatre 2: "A Far Off Place" (Mikael Salomon).

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Theatre 1: "Garden of Scorpions" (1991, directed by Oleg Kovalov; in Russian).
Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.
Theatre 3: "Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media" (Mark Achbar and Peter Wintonick).

Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: "Rich in Love" (†).
Theatre 2: "CB4" (Tamra Davis).

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: "Scent of a Woman" (†).
Theatre 2: "Mad Dog and Glory" (†).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: "Reservoir Dogs" (Quentin Tarantino).
Theatre 2: "Indochine" (†).
Theatre 3: "Riff-Raff" (Ken Loach).
Theatre 4: "Tous les Matins du Monde" (Alain Corneau, in French).

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: "Falling Down" (†).
Theatre 2: "Scent of a Woman" (†).
Theatre 3: "Passion Fish" (†).
Theatre 4: "Groundhog Day" (†).
Theatre 5: "The Crying Game" (†).
Theatre 6: Through March 18: "Falling Down" (†). From March 19: "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles III" (Stuart Gillard).
Theatre 7: "Rich in Love" (†).
Theatre 8: "Mad Dog and Glory" (†).
Theatre 9: "Untamed Heart" (†).

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: "CB4" (Tamra Davis).
Theatre 2: "Aladdin," an animated film; and "Best of the Best 2" (Robert Radler).
Theatre 3: "A Far Off Place" (Mikael Salomon).

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
"A Far Off Place" (Mikael Salomon).

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)
Theatre 1: "Damage" (Louis Malle).
Theatre 2: "Scent of a Woman" (†).
Theatre 3: "Army of Darkness" (Sam Raimi).
Theatre 4: "Enchanted April" (Mike Newell).
Theatre 5: "A Few Good Men" (Rob Reiner).
Theatre 6: Through March 18: "Glengarry Glen Ross" (James Foley), with Al Pacino; and "The Player" (Robert Altman). From March 19: "Groundhog Day" (†).

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
Through March 18: "Groundhog Day" (†).
From March 19: "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles III" (Stuart Gillard).

Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
"Passion Fish" (†).

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
"Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey" (†).

Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
Theatre 1: "Mac" (John Turturro).
Theatre 2: "Like Water for Chocolate" (Alfonso Arau; a Mexican film, in Spanish).

Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th. (586-1900)
"El Mariachi" (†).

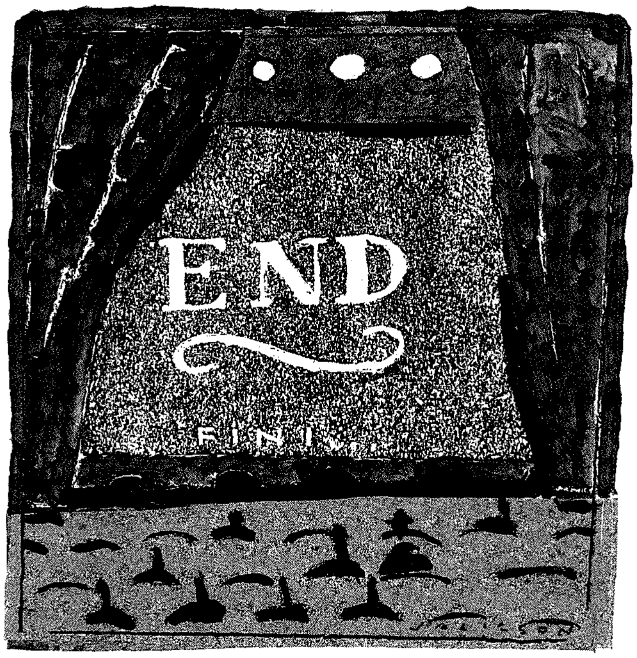
Fine Arts, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)
"The Lover" (Jean-Jacques Annaud).

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
"Howards End" (†).

Columbus Circle, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"Sommersby" (Jon Amiel).

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)
"Amos & Andrew" (†).

Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "Tous les Matins du Monde" (Alain Corneau, in French).
Theatre 2: "Indochine" (†).
Theatre 3: "The Crying Game" (†).



Theatre 4: "Olivier Olivier" (Agnieszka Holland; in French).
Theatre 5: "The Crying Game" (†).
Theatre 6: "Il Ladro di Bambini" (Gianni Amelio).

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
"Scent of a Woman" (†).

84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: "A Far Off Place" (Mikael Salomon).
Theatre 2: "Falling Down" (†).
Theatre 3: "Groundhog Day" (†).
Theatre 4: "Swing Kids" (Thomas Carter).
Theatre 5: "Unforgiven" (†).
Theatre 6: "Fire in the Sky" (Robert Lieberman).

Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: "Untamed Heart" (†).
Theatre 2: "Mad Dog and Glory" (†).

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: (Matinées only) "Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey" (†); and (evenings only) "Best of the Best 2" (Robert Radler).
Theatre 2: "CB4" (Tamra Davis).

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: "Unforgiven" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Bodyguard" (directed by Mick Jackson).
Theatre 3: "Falling Down" (†).
Theatre 4: "Sniper" (Luis Llosa).
Theatre 5: "Best of the Best 2" (Robert Radler).
Theatre 6: "The Crying Game" (†).
Theatre 7: Through March 18: "National Lampoon's Loaded Weapon 1" (Gene Quintano). From March 19: "Point of No Return" (John Badham), with Bridget Fonda.

Embassy 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
"Amos & Andrew" (†).

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 1: "Aladdin," an animated film.
Theatre 2: "Untamed Heart" (†).
Theatre 3: "Swing Kids" (Thomas Carter).

Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
"Fire in the Sky" (Robert Lieberman).

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: "CB4" (Tamra Davis).
Theatre 2: "Mad Dog and Glory" (†).

REVIVAL HOUSES

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Through March 18: "Ivan the Terrible, Parts I and II" (1944-46, directed by Sergei Eisenstein; in Russian).
From March 19: "The Queen" (1968, Frank Simon), a film of a transvestite pageant.

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
March 17: "Next Stop, Greenwich Village" (1976, Paul Mazursky); and "Harry & Tonto" (†).
March 18: "Three Days of the Condor" (1975, Sydney Pollack), with Robert Redford; and "Klute" (1971, Alan J. Pakula), with Jane Fonda.
March 19-20: "Wuthering Heights" (1939, William Wyler), with Merle Oberon and Laurence Olivier; and "Jane Eyre" (1944, Robert Stevenson), with Joan Fontaine and Orson Welles.
March 21: "Five Easy Pieces" (1970, Bob Rafelson), with Jack Nicholson; and "Easy Rider" (1969, Dennis Hopper), with Peter Fonda, Hopper, and Nicholson.
March 22: "Rififi" (1955, Jules Dassin; in French); and "Shoot the Piano Player" (1960, François Truffaut; in French).
March 23: "Fahrenheit 451" (1966, François Truffaut); and "Silent Running" (1972, Douglas Trumbill), with Bruce Dern.

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Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. (875-5600)—A series of Italian films directed by, or with, Alberto Sordi.

Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. (752-0824)—March 19 at 6:30: "Sansho the Bailiff" (†); and "Flowing" (1956, Mikio Naruse; in Japanese). . . . ¶ March 20 at 1: "Flowering"; and "Stepbrothers" (1957, Miyoji Ieki; in Japanese).

Symphony Space, B'way at 95th St. (864-5400)—March 23 at 7:30: "The Last Temptation of Christ" (1988, Martin Scorsese), with Willem Dafoe.

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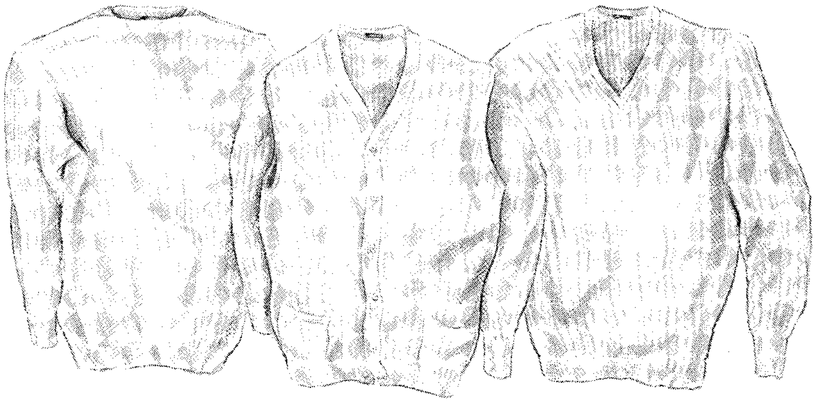

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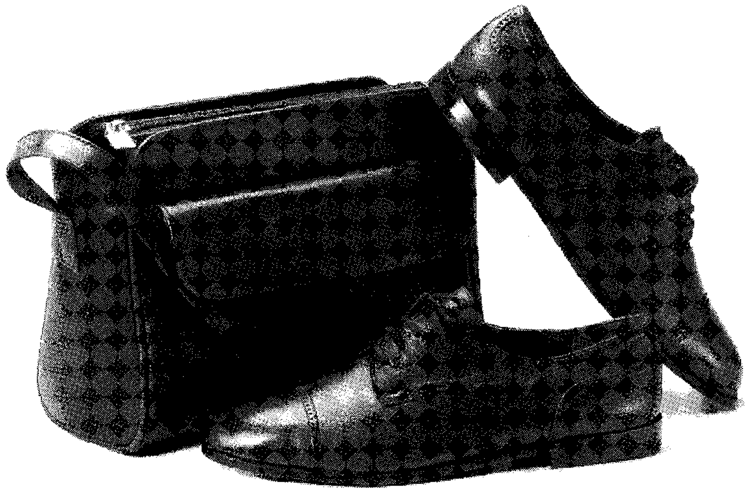

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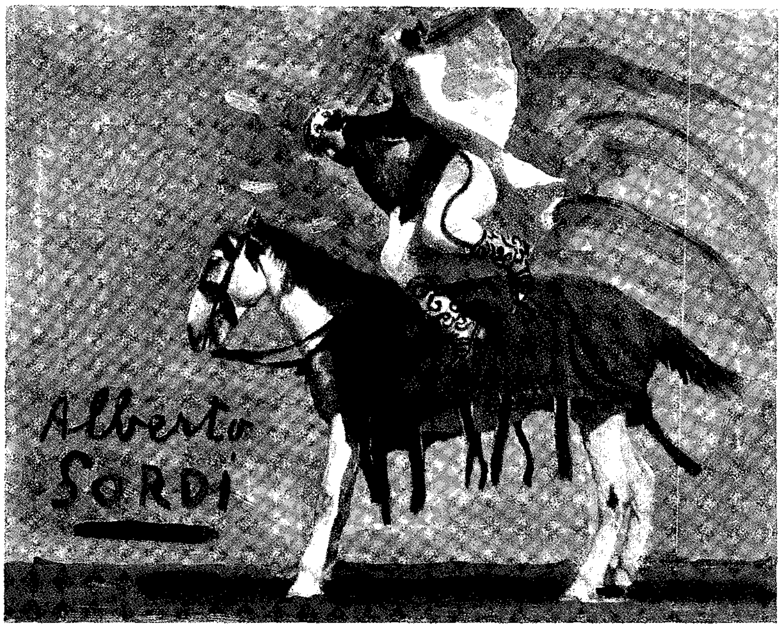

Alberto Sordi in "The White Sheik."

Comic Stripping

WHEN he made his solo directing début, "The White Sheik" (playing March 20-21, at the Walter Reade Theatre), Federico Fellini was already the maestro of his trademark mood—pathos-tinged gaiety. Filmed in the scarred, depressed Italy of 1952, this fond romantic satire of a young wife's escapist fantasies boasts a fresh, free spirit that recalls classic silent comedy. Because Fellini stays tuned to the emotions of provincial newlywed Wanda Giardino Cavalli (Brunella Bovo), the movie never *feels* mechanical, though you sometimes spot its plot turns a reel away. While on a brief Roman honeymoon with her officious husband, Ivan (Leopoldo Trieste), Wanda sneaks off to meet the White Sheik (Alberto Sordi), the he-man of her dreams: a swashbuckling hero of the *fumetti*, comic-book-like magazines that tell stories in photographs. Every character is absurd. Wanda mistakes manufactured pop for amorous reality; Ivan walks a path too straight and too narrow even for him; and the hilariously pillowy Sheik is a sort of inauthentic narcissist, hopelessly in love with his own concocted image. All the performers are at least amusing (including Giulietta Masina in the first presentation of her frisky prostitute, Cabiria), and Sordi is splendid. He has a grungy noblesse oblige. With his parody of sensuality, he's like something that would float into Wanda's head during a bubble bath.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Anthony Lane, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow.)

AMOS & ANDREW—Nicolas Cage is reason enough to see E. Max Frye's smartly constructed interracial-buddy comedy. Cage takes over the movie—snatches it clean away from the other principal performers, Samuel L. Jackson and Dabney Coleman, and the rest of the large and gifted cast. (In a few scenes, a beautiful and personable white German shepherd dog engages him in a fierce tug-of-war for the audience's attention, but Cage prevails.) The picture flirts with explosive subjects like race and class, but it has an oddly cozy, companionable tone. Frye, directing very cautiously and deliberately, doesn't do justice to his own script. About halfway through, a stubborn inconsequentiality sets in, and the movie loses urgency. At that point, the ingenious farce mechanics start to feel as if they were running on sheer inertia, because the satiric premise that set the whole thing in motion isn't driving it anymore. Also with Michael Lerner, Margaret Colin, Brad Dourif, Giancarlo Esposito, and (in a hilarious bit) Bob Balaban.—T.R. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/8/93.) (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Bay Cinema, Baronet, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Embassy 1.)

THE CRYING GAME—This amazing new movie by the Irish writer and director Neil Jordan ("Mona Lisa," "The Miracle") has the sure grip and the unstoppable momentum of a dream. Jordan tells the story of Fergus (Stephen Rea), a troubled I.R.A. gunman who undergoes a thorough emotional metamorphosis, and he makes the hero's change of heart moving and persuasive; the film inspires an irrational sort of trust, a willing suspension of something deeper and more fundamental than disbelief. The script is full of reversals and abrupt dislocations and, halfway through, the movie springs a huge, jaw-dropping surprise. Disorienting us isn't the ultimate aim of Jordan's artistic strategy, though; he jars us out of our accustomed responses to prepare us for the purer, more penetrating ones he really wants from us. The picture is a splendid entertainment—an elating, charmed sprint through all sorts of contemporary terrors. Also with Forest Whitaker, Miranda Richardson, Jim Broadbent, Adrian Dunbar, and a newcomer named Jaye Davidson, who is astonishing.—T.R. (11/16/92) (Angelika Film Center, Sutton, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Criterion Center.)

Falling Down—A crude vigilante picture disguised as social satire. The conceit is that American society is rigged against the average guy, and the movie means to entertain us with the spectacle of Joe Normal's revenge on his enemies—that is, on both those who are beneath him and those who are above him on the class scale. The middle-class hero (played with monotonous intensity by Michael Douglas) walks away from his car in a freeway traffic jam and sets out to cross Los Angeles on foot, arming himself as he goes—first with a baseball bat wrestled away from a Korean grocer, and later with artillery abandoned by gang members—and everyone who gets in his way winds up paying a price, from employees in a fast-food restaurant to fat-cat golfers. The movie evokes the self-pitying "silent majority" rhetoric of the Nixon era: that appalling sentimentality about one's own beleaguered and underappreciated virtue. It's no small feat to turn a sociopath into a martyr, but the director, Joel Schumacher, and the screenwriter, Ebbe Roe Smith, are up to the challenge. Also with Robert Duvall, Rachel Ticotin, Barbara Hershey, Frederic Forrest, and Tuesday Weld (floundering in a cruelly conceived role.) The ugly cinematography is by Andrzej Bartkowiak.—T.R. (3/8/93) (Village Theatre VII, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Groundhog Day—An above-average Bill Murray vehicle, directed by Harold Ramis from a script by Ramis and Danny Rubin. The star plays Phil Connors, a burned-out TV weatherman who wakes up one morning to discover that he's stuck in time—condemned to relive, endlessly, Groundhog Day in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania. The picture goes on a little too long, but Murray's inventiveness keeps it lively even during its less inspired stretches. The fundamental, deliberate monotony of the conception actually serves to highlight his skill at comic riffing. The movie feels like a spontaneous one-man jam session, and you sense that Murray can play all night, just for the fun of finding out what else he might come up with. He fools around as if there were no tomorrow. Also with Andie MacDowell, Chris Elliott, and Stephen Tobolowsky.—T.R. (2/22/93) (Village Theatre VII, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and 84th Street Sixplex. . . . ¶ Ziegfeld; through March 18. . . . ¶ Worldwide Cinemas; starting March 19.)

Harry & Tonto (1974)—Paul Mazursky's old-man-on-the-road comedy, with Art Carney, is the most difficult kind of comedy to bring off, because it comes directly from the moviemaker's feelings about life. It has a kind of transparency; that's why someone in the audience can say, "I don't know why I'm crying—this is such a silly movie." Harry is a widowed retired teacher. Evicted from his Upper West Side apartment because the building is being demolished, he tries suburban life in Riverdale with his businessman son (Phil Bruns). Rejecting that, he sets out with his cat, Tonto, to visit his daughter (Ellen Burstyn), a bookstore owner in Chicago, and his other son (Larry Hagman), who's hanging on by his teeth in Southern California. Uneven and often clumsy, yet with a distinctive satirical charm, the picture is full of misfits and faddists and social casualties. The celebrated acting teacher Herbert Berghof appears as Harry's New York friend, an aged radical. Joshua Mostel is Harry's grandson, who has taken a vow of silence. Harry meets a young girl, played by Melanie Mayron, and shares a jail cell with a medicine man, played by Chief Dan George. In a less felicitous episode he visits his first love, Geraldine Fitzgerald. Carney, who was actually 55, plays 72 without overdoing it (and without going lovable on us); Burstyn's character is alone and bitter in ways that impress themselves on one's memory; and Larry Hagman is simply amazing. Sally Marr (Lenny Bruce's mother) plays the friendly old broad at the end who suggests to Harry that they get together. Screenplay by Mazursky (who turns up for a flash, cruising Hagman) and Josh Greenfield.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; March 17.)

Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey—In Disney's too cute update of Sheila Burnford's sturdy cat-and-dogs story, Michael J. Fox provides the voice of Chance, a feisty bulldog (and narrator), Sally Field portrays Sassy, a haughty Himalayan cat, and Don Ameche does a noble, aging golden retriever named Shadow. As the animals pitch vibes, the actors speak their thoughts. It's easier to stomach their telepathy than it is to keep down the succession of bad jokes and homilies in Caroline Thompson and Linda Woolverton's script. As in Burnford's 1960 best-seller and the 1963 Disney film (which has a human narrator), the cat and two dogs trek through the wilderness to get back to where they once belonged. But here you have to endure wisecracks like Chance calling a mountain lion "Arnold Schwarzekitty." This version is as much a social parable as a nature movie—Fox's bulldog has the John Garfield/Frank Sinatra role of the scruffy pup from the wrong side of the tracks who learns to love middle-class domesticity. The animal charisma of Tiki as Sassy, Ben as Shadow, and Rattler as Chance, and the archness of the voice actors' dialogue, make it a schizophrenic experience: you can truly say of this movie's leads, "loved them, hated *them.*" Duwayne Dunham directed.—M.S. (Village Theatre VII, and 57th St. Playhouse. . . . ¶ Olympia. Matinées only.)

Howards End—James Ivory's movie version of the 1910 E. M. Forster novel is a handsome and intelligent piece of work: a faithful, well-paced, and carefully crafted dramatization of a very good story. The heroine, Margaret Schlegel (Emma Thompson), is a thirtyish Englishwoman of German ancestry who lives with her sister and her brother in a London town house. The emotional core of the movie is the brief, unlikely friendship that develops between Margaret and conservative Ruth Wilcox (Vanessa Redgrave), a woman who inhabits a narrow world so profoundly, and with such enormous feeling, that she transforms it. Redgrave is at her most radiant in this role. And Thompson, whose character is meant to be seen as the heir to Mrs. Wilcox's thoroughly English kind of spirituality, comes through with a thrilling, original performance; she carries the movie. (Anthony Hopkins, as the no-nonsense businessman Henry Wilcox, is awfully good, too.) All that's missing, really, is the elusive quality that makes Forster such a brave, moving writer: his constant striving to see beyond the story, to see through it, to transcend it. Adaptation by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala.—T.R. (5/4/92) (Village East Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, and Cinema 3.)

Indochine—The director, Régis Wargnier, uses his star, Catherine Deneuve, largely for her classical, indomitable profile—the same attribute that made her the 1985 model for the French national symbol, "Marianne." Indeed, in this wannabe epic about the waning of French Indochina, Wargnier reduces all his actors and characters to symbols: Deneuve, as a French plantation owner who's lived in Indochina all her life and carries on the spirit of pioneer colonialism; lovely Linh Dan Pham, as Deneuve's adopted daughter, an Annamese princess who becomes a revolutionary leader; and blank Vincent Perez, as a confused French naval officer who wows both mother and child, sparking romance and rebellion. This monument-like picture lacks urgency and staying power—the material oxidizes onscreen. With vistas by cinematographer François Catonné that should increase the tourist traffic in Vietnam and Malaysia. In French.—M.S. (Quad Cinema, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.—With Ariyan Johnson, Kevin Thigpen, Ebony Jerido, and Jerard Washington; directed by Leslie Harris. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Village Theatre VII, and Orpheum VII; starting March 19.)

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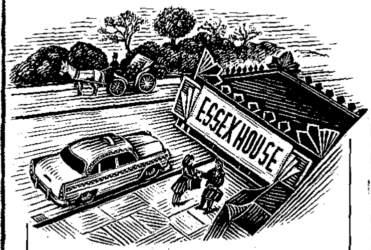

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IN BRIEF-Cont'd

The Last Days of Chez Nous—In a ramshackle Sydney household, an Australian family gets on with its life, but only just. Beth (Lisa Harrow) starts to lose her French husband, J.P. (Bruno Ganz), to the attentions of her sister Vicki (Kerry Fox); meanwhile, her daughter Annie (Miranda Otto) is falling quietly for Tim (Kiri Paramore), their lodger with the crewcut and the sense of humor. Gillian Armstrong's new movie is a worthy successor to "My Brilliant Career" and "High Tide"; if anything, it feels even more mobile, charting every shift in the emotional climate. It's hard to pin down just what kind of work it is: jokes at the dinner table can turn nasty and upsetting, but people also recover quickly, and sometimes dance without warning. It's a true ensemble movie: none of the performances are vain or showy—Harrow in particular braves all manner of self-exposure, so we can see the fear beneath her strength. This fluent, hopeful comedy (and it is a comedy, for all the encroachments of sadness) is Armstrong's best movie to date.—A.L. (3/1/93) (Village East Cinemas, and 68th St. Playhouse.)

Mad Dog and Glory—A strange and unsuccessful brew stirred up by screenwriter Richard Price and director John McNaughton. Love comes to a lonely cop called Wayne (Robert De Niro) when he saves the life of a Mafia smoothy (Bill Murray), who offers him a week's worth of Glory (Uma Thurman) by way of reward. Unlikely plots can be fun, but only if everybody is prepared to pitch in; this one feels graceless and trumped-up, and not even the spirited efforts of Bill Murray can kick it into life. McNaughton is looking for something else, and he spends the whole film not getting there: it sets off violently, tries a few jokes, changes tack to a mooching sadness, and finally settles for an old-style punch-up. Only great directors can cram this many tones into a movie and make all of them tell, and McNaughton (who previously made "Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer") doesn't qualify. De Niro seems to be putting on a show rather than lighting his character up from the inside, although he does have a couple of convincing scenes with Uma Thurman; moviegoers may have forgotten just how nervy and maladroit screen lovers can be.—A.L. (3/15/93) (34th St. East, Coronet, Orpheum VII, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Metro Cinema, and National Twin.)

Malcolm X—There's a great deal of passion in Spike Lee's three-hour-and-twenty-minute adaptation of "The Autobiography of Malcolm X," but it's not an artist's passion. Malcolm, who achieved fame in the early sixties as a compelling spokesman for the black-pride philosophy of the Nation of Islam, is an unlikely hero for a big-studio prestige picture: he begins as a predatory street criminal, becomes a studious Muslim ascetic, and fulfills himself as a scourge. The ponderous rhythms of the great-man bio-pic only emphasize the impossibility of rendering this story with conventional movie-narrative means. Denzel Washington's performance as Malcolm gets off to a rocky start—for the first hour, he's required to play the hero as a teen-ager—but it gains authority as the movie goes along. This film's Malcolm isn't so much a character as an image: a statue for us to look up at in wonder.—T.R. (11/30/92) (Plaza.)

El Mariachi—This first film by twenty-four-year-old Robert Rodriguez was made for seven thousand dollars, and part of its enormous charm is that it really looks like a seven-thousand-dollar movie. It's a grubby little thriller, set in a Mexican border town, about a wandering mariachi musician (Carlos Gallardo) who is mistaken for a killer. The picture is a virtually unbroken series of chases and shoot-outs, and the non-stop action should be tiresome, but it isn't. Rodriguez establishes a delirious pace, and keeps the bullets flying and the corpses crumpling for a brisk, and appropriately terse, eighty-two minutes. The movie has the sort of dry, bracingly unwholesome humor that relentless mayhem can produce if the characters are mean and abject enough and the storytelling is speedy and laconic. This young filmmaker is no visual wizard; he's just an energetic and imaginative manipulator of tried-and-true genre conventions. But if you enter his seedy world with expectations as low as the picture's aspirations, you'll probably have a very good time. In Spanish.—T.R. (2/22/93) (Village Theatre VII, and Angelika 57.)

Passion Fish—Eighteen years ago, John Sayles might have boiled down this back-to-basics portrait of a paralyzed, bitter white soap star (Mary McDonnell) and her strong-willed black caretaker (Alfre Woodard) into a twenty-page short story. But as a movie writer-director-editor, he lets himself gas on about it for two and a quarter hours. Sayles has an ear for regional accents and colloquial dialogue, and an eye for quotidian details. But he's better on nuts and bolts than he is on heart and soul. Sayles predictably alternates scenes of rehab drama and female friendship with comic relief and local (Louisiana) color. Only David Strathairn and Vondie Curtis-Hall cut through the monotony as the heroines' earthy admirers. Those who've seen Sayles' bit in "Matinee" promoting the ant-man horror movie "Mant" might hope that the title creatures in this film will turn out to be imaginative hybrids, too. No such luck—they're simply little fishies attached to big metaphors.—M.S. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Gotham Cinema, Chelsea Cinemas, and Festival.)

Rich in Love—With Albert Finney, Jill Clayburgh, Kathryn Erbe, Suzy Amis, Piper Laurie, Kyle MacLachlan, Ethan Hawke, and Alfre Woodard; directed by Bruce Beresford. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Beekman, Waverly, and Chelsea Cinemas.)

Sansho the Bailiff (1954)—Kenji Mizoguchi's masterpiece is a heartbreaking medieval fable with modern political and psychological undertones. An exiled statesman taught his son Zushio that "without mercy, a man is like a beast." But Zushio can't hold on to that ideal. When kidnappers sell his mother into prostitution, and Zushio and his sister into Sansho's slave camp, the boy grows up a barbarian. Like the worst concentration-camp Kapo, he's willing to brand attempted escapees on the forehead. The first half hour is a cascade of flashbacks and present-tense action; in the camp, volatile lyricism gives way to relentless power. It's as if Mizoguchi is saying, sadly, this is how the world works. The movie takes a fairy-tale turn, but no one lives happily ever after. Terrifying and cathartic, "Sansho" is a morality play without easy moralism. Kinuyo Tanaka is superb as the mother.—M.S. (Japan Society; March 19.)

Scent of a Woman—Director Martin Brest and screenwriter Bo Goldman labor mightily to design a holiday-season heart-warmer about a middle-aged blind man and a troubled teen-ager (Chris O'Donnell), but fortunately their low intentions are undone by the star, Al Pacino, whose performance taps emotions too complex and too frightening to be resolved by the simple moral victory that ends the picture. His Frank Slade, a retired Army officer and former aide to L.B.J., is a bitter, misanthropic, profoundly depressed man, and the actor makes us feel the full weight of the character's hopelessness. This is acting that chills the heart beyond any possibility of warming. The filmmakers may dismiss the audience with a banal lesson written on the blackboard—"Smell the roses" is the gist—but by the end we're not paying much attention. We're still sorting out the ambiguities and uncomfortable truths that Pacino's great performance has let us in on.—T.R. (12/28/92-1/4/93) (First & 62nd Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Worldwide Cinemas, and Regency.)

Shadow of the Wolf—Up in the Arctic in 1935, a rebellious young Inuit, Agaguk (Lou Diamond Phillips), argues with his father (Toshiro Mifune), commits a crime, and wanders out into the snow. You know just what kind of movie this is supposed to be—pure elemental, verging on myth. Needless to say, it turns out rather differently—laughable, strident, and very nearly mad. As in most polar movies, the characters often have to shout their lines to be heard above the wailing of the winds, although the loudest sound of all is the pained scream of Igiyook (Jennifer Tilly) giving birth to Agaguk's son. The young couple wander through the movie waiting to be attacked by the vengeful white wolf. When it finally strikes, Agaguk is so badly clawed that he has to wear a mask; you keep wondering what the Phantom of the Opera is doing up in the frozen North. Jacques Dorfmann's film ends hilariously with a man turning into a falcon, which is presumably his idea of high-flown.—A.L. (3/15/93) (Village East Cinemas. Evenings only. . . . ¶ Gemini; through March 18.)

Strictly Ballroom—Baz Luhrmann's first film brings good news: Australian cinema is on the move again, with a vigor not seen since the days of "Mad Max." There's no violence in "Strictly Ballroom"—the general lack of unpleasantness, in fact, is quite unnerving—but the speed of it still leaves you reeling. A young dancer, played by Paul Mercurio, acquires a new partner (Tara Morice), dreams up a flash routine, and sets out to break the Old Guard. The plot is cut-rate melodrama, and Luhrmann knows it; but he never sneers at his hero's ambitions. Besides, there are so many other things to laugh at—the costumes, the minor characters with their major obsessions, the psychedelic makeup, the trashy music. The movie is over before you know it, and is not one to linger in the mind, or indeed pass through the mind at all; but it's a good-humored ride for the senses, never too sickly, and who can say no to that?—A.L. (2/15/93) (Angelika Film Center, and First & 62nd Cinemas.)

Unforgiven—Set in eighteen-eighties Kansas and Wyoming, this engrossing, moody Western is the sixteenth film Clint Eastwood has directed, and by far the best. The canny script, by David Webb Peoples, revives the old story about the retired gunfighter (Eastwood) who picks up his firearms again for one last score. But there's no easy resolution, and the movie is stronger because of its loose ends: the filmmakers acknowledge that the bloody chaos of an outlaw's life can't be settled in two hours and eleven minutes. The action begins when a cowboy slashes the face of a prostitute, and her co-workers pool their money to offer a reward for the murder of him and his partner. Jaimz Woolvett is the upstart who enlists Eastwood in the bounty hunt. Morgan Freeman plays Eastwood's longtime partner, Gene Hackman a megalomaniac sheriff, Richard Harris a flamboyant English gunslinger, and Saul Rubinek a dime novelist. This is the finest set of performances ever to grace a Clint Eastwood movie, and this time Eastwood even does a good job directing Eastwood. Every bullet in this movie matters; under its leathery hide is a genuine compulsion to de-romanticize Western gunfighting.—M.S. (8/10/92) (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Untamed Heart—A young man with a weak heart (Christian Slater), who works in a crummy diner, gets noticed by a lonely waitress (Marisa Tomei). You can guess the rest, but that doesn't detract from the mild, inoffensive pleasure of Tony Bill's film. The love story takes second place to the casual comedy that surrounds it—bored girls sitting around talking about boys. One of them is played by Rosie Perez, who's a natural at this kind of thing; but even her perkiness is put in the shade by Tomei, who brings startling high spirits to a dullish role. She snatches moments of happiness out of the air and shares them out to anyone who's around. The title, by the way, refers to some weird story about the hero's past—he thinks his heart came from a monkey—but the film skids around this in confusion. On the other hand, he does look a bit of an ape; O.K., love is love, but you still wonder what Tomei is doing with him.—A.L. (2/15/93) (Murray Hill Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Metro Cinema, and Embassy.)

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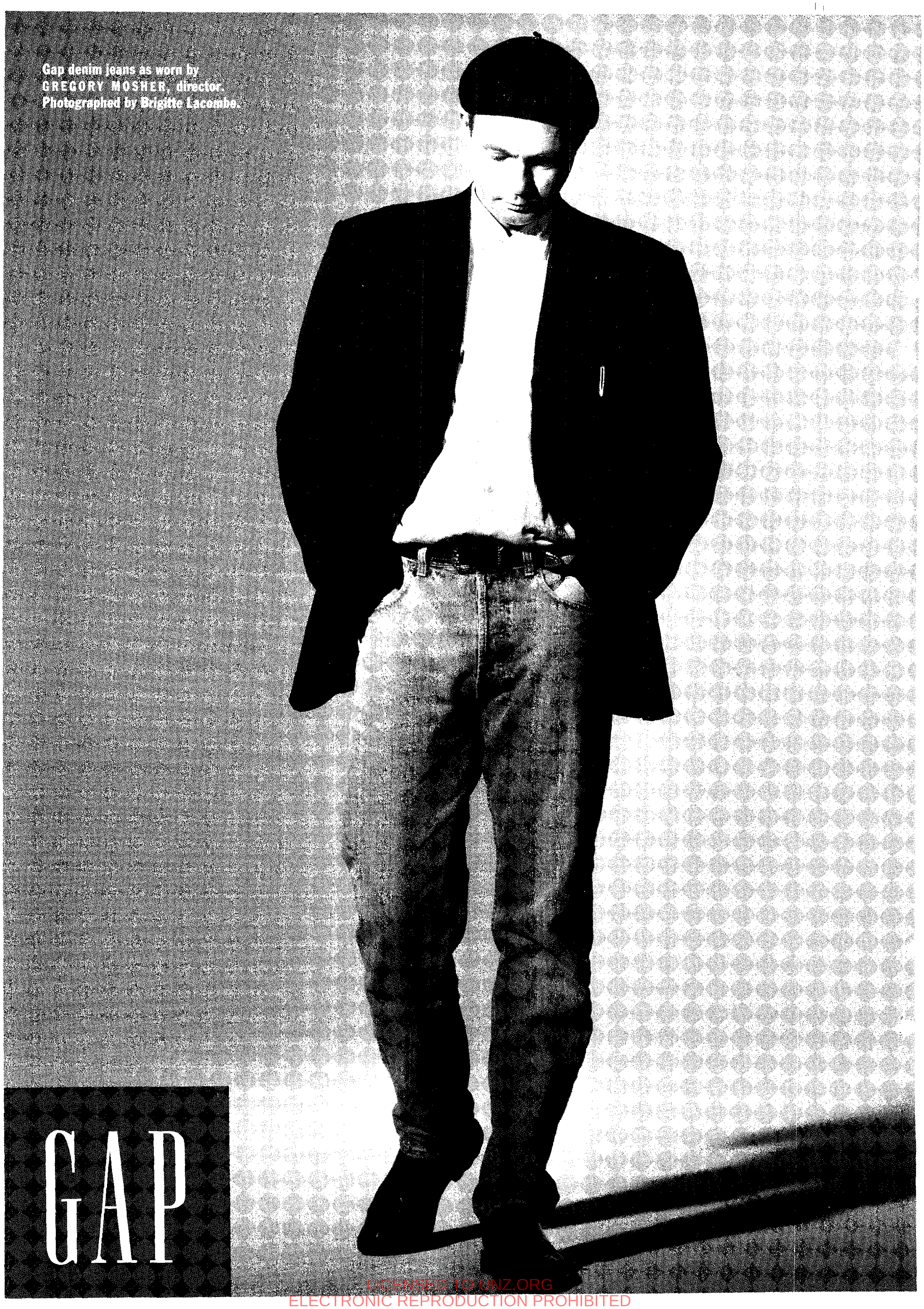


Gap denim jeans as worn by
GREGORY MOSHER, director.
Photographed by Brigitte Lacombe.

GAP

THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

BREAK IN THE CLOUDS

BRENDAN FAY is the sort of Irishman who still describes New York City's geography in terms of parishes: someone is living over in St. Francis Xavier's, or something happened out in St. Sebastian's. The taped message on his telephone-answering machine is in Irish as well as in English. Mr. Fay, who grew up in Drogheda, in County Louth, and came to this country nine years ago, lectures on Irish history, has served on the board of the Celtic League, and is an enthusiastic dancer at traditional ceilis. Until two years ago, he taught religion at the Mary Louis Academy, a Catholic high school for girls in Queens. That job, which he dearly loved, effectively came to an end in March of 1991, after a photograph in the local press showed him marching in the St. Patrick's Day Parade.

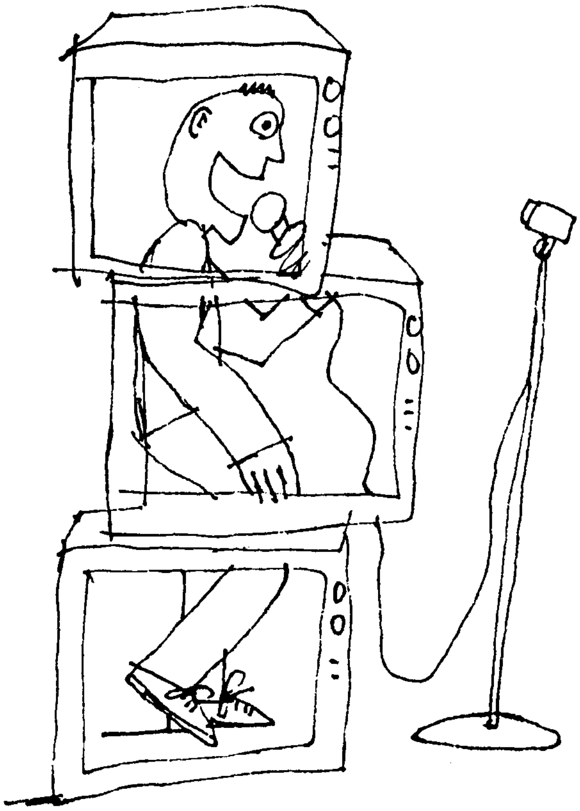
Anne Maguire, for her part, didn't want to know about things Irish when she moved here from Dublin, five and a half years ago. "That lasted for the first two and a half years or so," she says. "I just needed a break from Ireland, and I didn't want to be next or near Irish people. But then I realized that I actually needed that contact." And so Ms. Maguire and Mr. Fay helped found, in the spring of 1990, the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organization, or ILGO. "People just flocked to the group," Ms. Maguire recalls. "There was like this big sigh of relief. We didn't have to be Irish over *here* and gay over *here* anymore. We could be both."

ILGO fielded a contingent for the Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade that year, then applied to march in the 1991 St. Patrick's Day Parade. Some members, like Mr. Fay, had been marching in the big parade for years, usually with one of the thirty-two county organizations. Ms. Maguire, who had grown up watching the parade on television in Dublin, had dutifully taken photographs of it for the folks back home when she first came to New York. ILGO found itself on a waiting list, which later turned out to be, in the words of a hearing-court judge, "a waiting list to nowhere." The Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Catholic fraternal organization that puts on the St. Patrick's Day Parade, eventually made it clear that it simply did not want ILGO to participate. In the end, ILGO and its friends and supporters marched, without a banner, under the aegis of a sympathetic official contingent, and Mayor Dinkins marched with them.

Two million spectators lined Fifth Avenue for the 1991 parade, and a significant fraction of the crowd—just how big a fraction is still disputed—turned ugly. Beer cans were thrown, threats and insults hurled. Some of the abuse was racist, but most of it was anti-gay. There were some cheers, and a woman threw a hundred and fifty dyed-green carnations, each carefully tied with a lavender ribbon, to the ILGO marchers, but yells of "Die, fags!" and "AIDS! AIDS! AIDS!" dominated the day. "The hatred was just so overwhelming," Anne Maguire recalls. "Even though they didn't beat us, they actually gave us the worst hiding of our lives."

Brendan Fay remembers the march rather differently. "Here we were, this tiny, very vulnerable group of people, saying, 'We're not going to take it anymore, we're not going to be ashamed of who we are,'" he says. "It was one of the most important spiritual moments of my life."

It was the next day that the newspapers ran the photograph that cost Brendan Fay his job. His students protested his firing—more



SCOTT MENCHIN

than a hundred signed a petition—but, Mr. Fay says, "when we gays and lesbians emerged from invisibility, what came out of the closet on the other side was a monster. It's a violent image, I know, but the prejudice we've uncovered is just incredible." Mr. Fay, whose speech and manner are the farthest thing from violent—he is slight, scraggly-bearded, soft-spoken, and, at thirty-four, devastatingly earnest—today works in a lamp shop. "The 1991 parade was a turning point in my life," he says simply.

It was also a catalytic event for ILGO, which began to focus more and more of its attention on the St. Patrick's Day Parade. In 1992, when the Ancient Order of Hibernians again denied ILGO permission to participate, the group staged a short protest march—from Fifty-ninth Street, past the reviewing stand, to Sixty-eighth Street—then found itself confined to a heavily guarded area for spectators. There its members became targets of abuse from some of the approved marchers, including, according to eyewitnesses, uniformed policemen and firemen as they paraded past. The size of the crowd lining the Avenue, however, had fallen dramatically from the previous year—the official figure for 1992 was three hundred and fifty thousand—and the decline was widely attributed to the controversy over ILGO's participation. While many non-Irish gay activists were now turning out on St. Patrick's Day to show their solidarity, ILGO's own membership suffered as members became unhappy with the overriding focus on the parade and drifted away. "This is something we never intended to happen," says a young lawyer and ILGO member named Paul O'Dwyer, who grew up in rural Kilkenny. "But, now that it has, it's extremely important that we not give up."

This year, ILGO, once again blocked from participation, has been planning another protest march, and its handful of active members have been consumed with preparations: leafletting ("Homophobes Have Hijacked the Irish National Holiday"); recruiting and training marshals; raising money with Queer Bingo.

Queer Bingo?

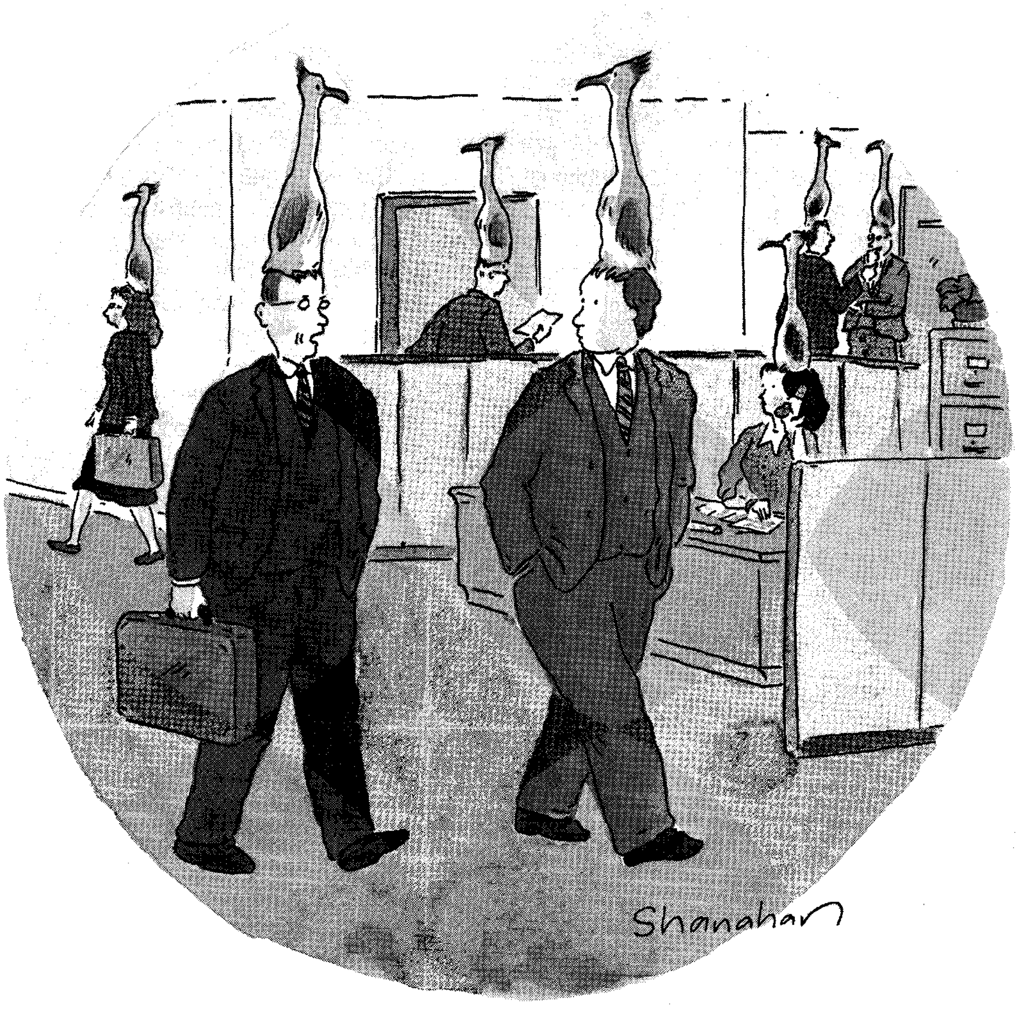
"Yes, when we're not sodomizing each other under the cathedral and trying to destroy the Roman Catholic Church in all its manifestations, we try to bring down Western civilization by playing bingo," Mr. O'Dwyer explained. "That's what we do to make money and relax on a Sunday afternoon."

Mr. O'Dwyer, as he spoke, was sitting on the floor of an apartment on Gramercy Park South, where the ILGO parade working group was meeting. It was early March, and the group was now meeting every other night. Brendan Fay had a report from the St. Patrick's Day Parade on Staten Island, which takes place each year a week or two before the big parade. "The police were really great," he said. "They assigned *detectives.* A couple of young people, they threw stink bombs to show their appreciation."

Anne Maguire said she had a fax number for Mary Robinson, the President of Ireland.

Brendan wanted to know if there was anyone present besides him who could read Irish. The Irish-Americans, who now make up about half of the ILGO membership, shook their heads. Anne said she could read Irish.

Native Irish and Irish-Americans alike shook their heads over reports that lesbian and gay groups were marching in St. Patrick's Day parades this year in Dublin and Cork. In Cork last year, a lesbian-and-gay group was named Best New Entry while carrying a banner that said "Hello, New York!" The irony was hardly lost on those who had left old Ireland for that capital of tolerance New York City. Marie Honan, Anne's lover, who hails from County Clare, complained about "this absurd, sentimentalized



"That may be, but if you-know-who loses his protected status we're all out on our butts."

idea of Ireland that some Americans are so intent on. It has nothing to do with the real place."

Eileen Clancy, an Irish-American, talked about being pleasantly accosted with Anne on Sixth Avenue by a group of schoolchildren who recognized Anne from press photographs. Anne, who is very tall and has a stunning crop of fire-engine-red hair, is new to celebrity, and was nonplussed at being asked for an autograph.

Brendan, who remains a devout Catholic, reported, "We've actually become the talk of the chancellery. The monsignors are talking about ILGO over their wine and cheese."

The recent efforts of much of the local Catholic clergy, led by John Cardinal O'Connor, to depict ILGO's purpose as primarily anti-Catholic were deplored.

What *is* ILGO's purpose?

Specifically, it seems, it really is just to be allowed to march in the St. Patrick's Day Parade with everyone else, to pass the reviewing stand on upper Fifth Avenue, and to have the dignitaries there look the group over without sneering or turning their backs. More generally, John Voelcker, an Irish-American member, said quietly, "We're all going through this so that the fourteen-year-olds who are coming along now won't have to go through it."

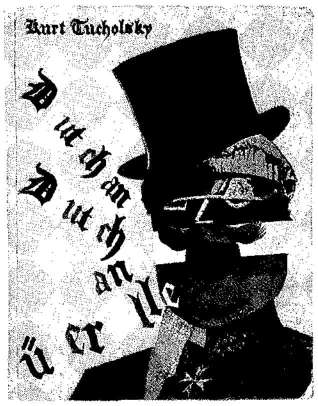
Later, Brendan Fay explained, "We're learning to break through the heavy cloud of silence that we grew up with." After a pause, he went on, "Because a revolution really has taken place, you know. The St. Patrick's Day Parade will never be the same. We have changed the discourse in our community around sexual issues forever."

MENU REBELLION

THE nineteen-eighties brought a great boom in home delivery of Chinese food and, with it, great tottering stacks of Chinese menus in apartment-building lobbies and a slithering procession of individual menus under apartment front doors. At first, apartment dwellers responded by putting up polite signs in their doorways that said "No menus." But the menus kept coming. Buildings began embellishing their "No menus" signs with Chinese characters bearing the same message. Still unable to stem the tide, the messages on the

INTO THE FLAMES

I STEPPED the other day from the peacetime din and confusion of Fifth Avenue into the genuine madness of the world of Hitler merely by walking up the front steps of the New York Public Library, past the benign lions, and into the exhibit "Assault on the Arts—Culture and Politics in Nazi Germany." One moment, civilization; the next, barbarism. And the two separated by a perilously thin line of constant civic vigilance. In a building literally overflowing with millions of books, I was looking at a small-screen movie of Storm Troopers gleefully tossing volume after volume onto giant pyres, their flames reaching high into the sky. The exhibit is artfully claustrophobic: because the sections—fine arts, film and music, and literature—are separated by tall columns, visitors have the feeling of being caught in a wicked maze. I pass "degenerate art"—works by such masters as George Grosz, Klee, Kandinsky, and Kokoschka. And, of course, Thomas Mann (banned). In a glass case are ornately bound volumes of "Mein Kampf," presentation copies designed for the hands of pure Aryans on such special occasions as retirements and weddings. I turn a corner, and am face to face with a tall listening booth. I press a button, and out comes the "Accepted" selection, the horrid evocative sounds of the Horst Wessel Song. I press another button and out comes the "Banned" seductive voice of Marlene Dietrich, as Lola Lola in the unforgettable "Der Blaue Engel," singing "Falling in Love Again." I face a small-screen movie of Hitler wrapped in a giant raincoat and smugly watching a monstrous, garish parade in Munich to mark the opening, in July, 1937, of the Great German Art Exhibition.



Suddenly, I am reliving a day in May, 1945, a week or so after the war in Europe ended, when I was reporting for this magazine from the grotesque ruins of Hitler's house and compound in Berchtesgaden. I had been poking through the rubble in the company of the celebrated correspondent Dorothy Thompson, an old friend from New York. Miss Thompson was a woman of remarkable courage. Earlier that day, as she was driving through the Austrian village of Klagenfurt, her car had been hit by a British Army van and completely overturned. I was in the car directly behind, and thought her dead. She emerged, dusted herself off, and proceeded to Berchtesgaden. After examining the bombed-out Berghof (Hitler's house) and the nearby barracks (designed for eight hundred S.S. men), Miss Thompson and I headed up a road, high in the Alps, built by hundreds of Yugoslav laborers, that led to the Führer's Adlerhorst, or Eagle's Nest, on the Kehlstein. The road stopped a thousand feet below the summit, and we struggled up a scraggly path, past low frozen shrubs and ice fields, to the Adlerhorst itself, the spot to which Hitler repaired at four o'clock on Sunday afternoons to plan the death of millions. And what did we find? A jail-like hexagonal gray granite building of unsurpassing ugliness—deserted, Hitler dead, the thousand-year dream a shambles.

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—PHILIP HAMBURGER

signs turned plaintive ("Stop! No menus, please!") and then angry ("Boycott restaurants that throw menus in your halls").

The menu explosion had its origins in James Shau's decision, in 1976, to abandon his career in nuclear medicine to help found the Empire Szechuan, a restaurant at Broadway and Ninety-seventh Street. Mr. Shau remembered that as a graduate student he had vainly sought a restaurant that would deliver food to him at home. So Empire Szechuan, he decided, would accept telephone orders and deliver.

In a few years, Mr. Shau began an informal franchise operation with some of his employees, which allowed them to open their own restaurants under the Empire banner, with names such as Empire Szechuan Garden and Empire Szechuan Valley. The Empire empire now includes ten restaurants in Manhattan.

The Empires distributed their menus with singular persistence. Captain Lewis Manetta, the top policeman in the Twentieth Precinct, on the Upper West Side, says, "Empire would have guys with two big shopping bags full of menus dumping them in buildings up and down the same block twice a week. I had people come to me and say menu deliverers pried open the front doors of apartment buildings in order to drop their menus."

Eventually, Saul Lapidus, who owns a small apartment building on West Seventy-fourth Street, decided to take action after some menus wafted out of his building onto the street, and he received a fifty-dollar citation from the Department of Sanitation for littering the sidewalk. He complained to Captain Manetta, and last December 17th Manetta sent an officer to deliver a summons to the original Empire Szechuan, charging the restaurant with a criminal violation of the Littering Ordinance of the New York City Administrative Code, which bans the distribution of "advertising matter . . . in the vestibule of any hall in any building." This Tuesday, Mr. Shau is due to answer the charge in Manhattan Criminal Court, facing possible penalties of two hundred and fifty dollars in fines and ten days in jail.

Mr. Shau, who admits that some of his employees may be a bit overzealous but blames the fuss on the kind of people who have "nothing better to do all day than sit around and find the bone in the egg," met with Captain Manetta and promised that the restaurants would in future honor all "No menus" signs. ("I'm skeptical," Captain Manetta says.) Mr. Shau says he has not hired a lawyer but, "like a man," will answer the charges himself.

OLD GREEKS

Classicists come in different shapes and different sizes, and they were out in numbers last week at the Metropolitan Museum. The occasion was the museum's long-awaited show on the Greeks. It is called "The Greek Miracle: Classical Sculpture from the Dawn of Democracy, the Fifth Century B.C.," and last fall, when it went up at the National Gallery in Washington, critics sniffed a little. But the people at the Met don't seem to mind. A snapping blue banner occupies center stage on the old façade. There are forty-five pieces of sculpture in all, some of which have never before travelled out of Greece. The sponsor, Philip Morris, calls them "seminal works," and that's basically right.

The show has been laid out in one of the grandest of the museum's proliferating modern galleries. The Lehman wing is a squat gray tower with a glass pyramid for a top. The galleries run along the walls, above a courtyard with potted plants, and the exhibition follows a clockwise path. Olympians in various states of delicate ruin have been scattered through Mr. Lehman's wing. There is the famous Kritios Boy, with his battered gray nose and perfectly balanced posture. There are elaborate friezes, hoisted from the Acropolis; headless maidens in flowing robes; Athena, in a textbook pose, leaning thoughtfully on her spear.

The Greeks opened officially last week, but not before members of the museum and members of the press were allowed to wander through. They came in droves, looking thoughtful: grand ladies in dusty fur coats, ponytailed curators from the bowels of the museum, TV people from Brazil in exotic American clothes. Omar, a sound man for TV Manchete, wore a bomber jacket decorated with strange flags. He carried a cellular telephone, and watched the museum people as they travelled the hall in pairs. "This is really interesting," one grand lady said to another. "So many little heads I'd love to steal."

The catalogue (hardcover, $39.50; paper, $25) is an elaborate thing, freighted with high-sounding scholarly introductions and with letters from world leaders. President Bush put in a good word before leaving office. "It is fitting that we commemorate the birth of democratic ideals some 2,500 years ago," he wrote. Some have taken issue with that. Some say it's propaganda. To equate the development of classical form with the rise of democracy is a little pat, and isn't worth the risk of packing up these fabulous items and flying them around the globe. Writing for *Time*, Robert Hughes called the entire enterprise "a very odd show."

But Omar didn't seem to care about the overarching political commentary, or even to notice it. Not many people at the Met did. Certainly not Dr. S. Lane Faison, a bespectacled figure with a shock of white hair. "Have you ever been to Greece?" he cried, a happy man. For years, he taught art history at Williams College. He likes to punch people in a playful way when he talks, and he still likes to teach them things. "I didn't get to Greece until I was seventy. It helped. That's a piece of the Parthenon, for God's sake! I can see them lifting it with a forklift. Horrible sight. See these fellas—they're Athenian cavalry, four of them, riding three abreast. Follow the horses' legs. Figure out where they belong."

Dr. Faison peered at one of the Greeks. "The head's all banged up," he said. The piece in question—perhaps Theseus, the experts say, and definitely a man—is carved from yellowed marble, the right arm gone, the left outstretched. Regarding the figure—crouched in battle, warding off Amazons—Dr. Faison, an expert in his own right, crouched, too. "It's been scalped, for God's sake," he said, and then he drifted away, in his pin-striped suit and soft brown shoes, walking counterclockwise through the crowd, for a last look at the old Greeks. ♦

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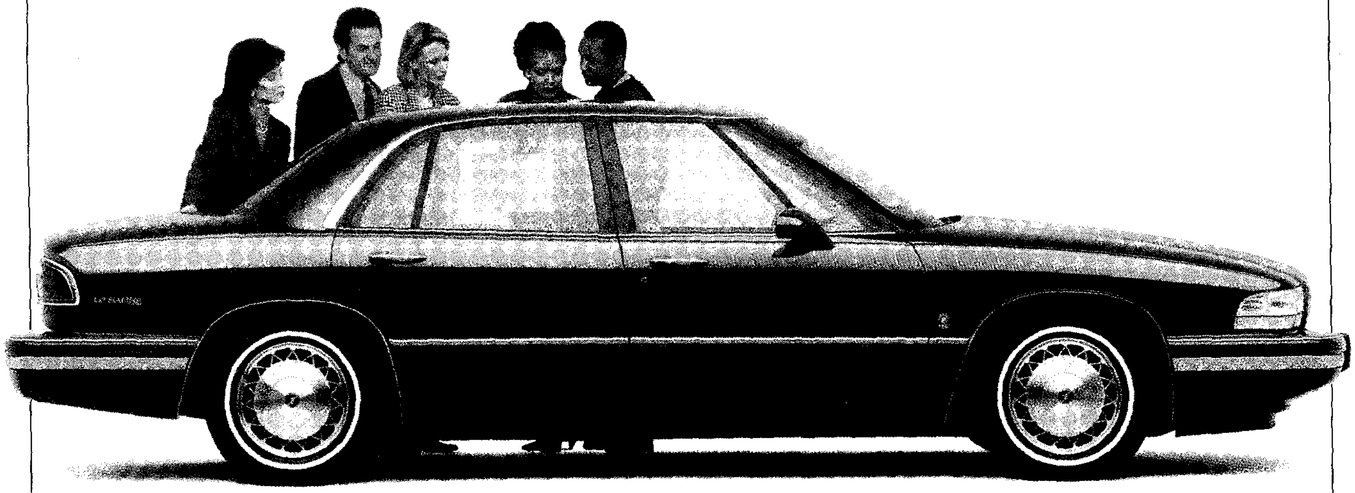

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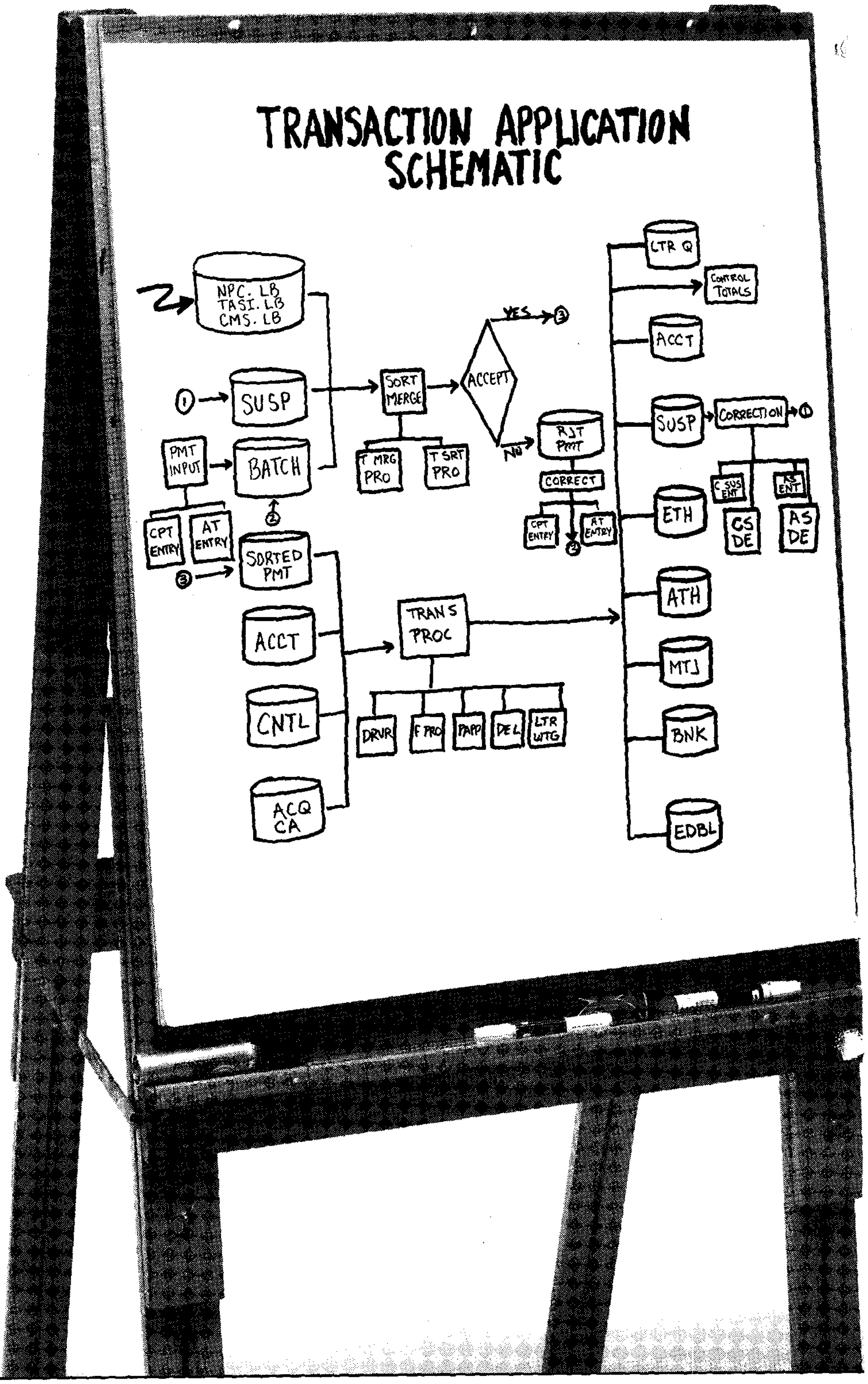
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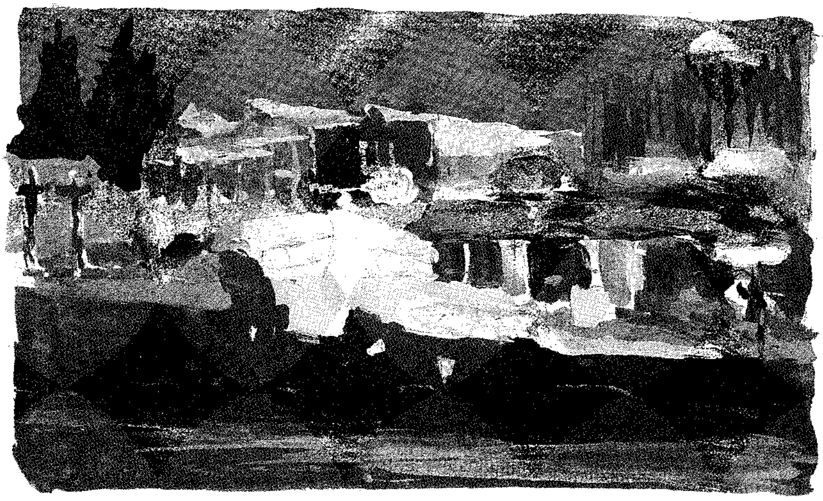
CITY SLICKERS

"Northern Exposure" may be a hit, but on location in Roslyn, Washington (pop. 869), it usually plays more like a scene out of "Bad Day at Black Rock."

BY BRYAN DI SALVATORE



GARY PANTER

YOU might come here on a Thursday in the rain, to this lopsided and homely hamlet, eighty miles east of Seattle, where nothing is not built on a slope and the houses are wood and are fastened to the sides of a burled, narrow ravine. The bare ones, as dark as the coal smoke that stained them for decades, seem as everlasting as caves. Others, patted with aluminum siding, look recent, ill-advised. The yards meld, unfenced, with the streets and each other, and are spotted with stuff: gleam-lost pickup trucks, sedan hulks, motorcycle frames, stacks of brush, plywood gone to corduroy, pipe, water heaters, bathtubs, bales of hay, the odd horse. The town exists in a state of gonna-get-to-it-someday clutter, as if a long-ago foreman had looked at his watch and said, "Hell, boys, this'll hold. Let's knock off and go pound some Budweiser."

This is the town that moonlights as Cicely, Alaska, in the CBS television series "Northern Exposure." Early of a day, it looks suspended, like Frontier Town between shoot-'em-up skits. Its Main Street, Pennsylvania Avenue, is four blocks of stone buildings, vacant lots, and tall, narrow wooden buildings with false fronts: a bank, a hardware store, two taverns, two cafés, a restaurant and bar, a pizza parlor, a museum, a drugstore, a post office, a microbrewery, a gift shop, a gift shop, a gift shop.

There's hardly a car to be seen. At a café, men meet for coffee and breakfast before the young ones leave for work and the old ones don't. The thick newspapers from the coast haven't yet arrived. The taverns won't open for hours. A log truck blats its engine brake, and its high, shaggy load spills moss and plates of bark along State Highway 903, which bisects Pennsylvania Avenue and dead-ends north of town in a national forest.

AS far as Christine Lewis—the manager of the Washington State Film and Video Office—was concerned, Roslyn was the perfect location for filming a television series about contemporary Alaska.

"In the winter of 1990, I took a call from Matt Nodella, a producer for Cine-Nevada Productions," she says. "They had no script, but they did have a story line for a television series that would take place in a remote Alaskan town. Immediately, I thought of Roslyn. I described it to them, *pleaded* with them to take a look, but they insisted that any site in the state had to be no more than forty-five minutes from Greater Seattle—where the soundstages would be located—and Roslyn is an hour and a quarter on a good day. We made a trip anyway, but bad weather prevented us from topping Snoqualmie Pass. Not a great selling point, I hardly have to point out! At the time, Cine-Nevada was scouting all *over* the West—Colorado, British Columbia. Alaska, of course, was out of the question: too far, too expensive. More pleading, and they finally humored me. We piled into a four-wheel-drive, *flew* over the pass, turned off the Interstate, drove up 903, and turned onto Pennsylvania Avenue.

"Their eyes grew wide. They jumped out of the car, looked around for a few seconds. Then Matt turned to me and said, 'Christine, *this is Alaska!*' "

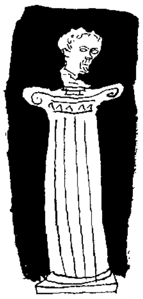
"NORTHERN EXPOSURE" is a tinkling, wafty piece of work (far too delicate to bear the braying of a laugh track, for example) that originally centered on a cerebral urban brat who, forced to relocate to a dreary backwater, finds his hard-edged pomposity becoming daily more bevelled. The beached fish in "Northern Exposure" is Joel Fleischman, a newly licensed physician from Manhattan. To pay off medical-school loans granted him by the State of Alaska, he must practice for four years in Cicely, five hours by bus from Anchorage.

Over time, the "Northern Exposure" writers have turned their attention away from Fleischman's one-note predicament—variations on a theme of bagel-and-culture deprivation—and toward Cicely's mildly eccentric residents. Cicely is an assortment of the socially halt and the artistically pensive: a logorrheic ex-convict incessantly searching for Truth; a grouchy former astronaut searching for new challenges; a young, not quite dim former beauty queen searching for self-respect; her much older lover, who runs the Brick Tavern, searching for surcease from his worries about the age-and-energy gap between him and the beauty queen; a Midwestern Wasp tomboy searching for true love and an identity independent of her stifling, moneyed roots; a young Alaskan Indian searching for the inspiration to make the Great American Film; and Ruth-Anne, a plainspoken old dame who dispenses bushels of wisdom over the counter of her general store. These characters flutter between benign contumacy and coöperation. They expend much energy disagreeing, then agreeing to disagree. They experience mild epiphanies weekly and become ever worthier, certainly more self-intimate, souls. Feuds are short-lived. Transgressions and flaws are routinely forgiven. The dead return regularly to communicate with the living. We're all strangers here, so Welcome, Stranger.

Roslyn, on the other hand, has always been stoutly tethered to the messier, fiercer actual world. Although individual residents, like those of Cicely, can be open-minded and generous and tolerant—curious and light on their worldly feet—the place on the whole has the disposition of a jumped rhinoceros and the memory of an elephant.

It was conceived, on purpose, in 1886, a company town for the coal miners who fed the engines of the Northern Pacific Railway. It grew up grimy and clanking on the seam of the vast forest to the west and the ranch- and farmland to the east; a polyethnic municipality of Italians, Slavs of every sort, blacks, Syrians, and French in a lonely, blue-eyed land of Swedes, Finns, Irish, and Norwegians.

It began dying in 1915, the year its population peaked at four thousand. By 1963, when the last mine closed, nearly all of Roslyn's men had already been working elsewhere for a decade: logging, railroading, trucking, or building dams and highways for the federal government. For the last twenty years, it has watched the Seattle rich—attracted to nearby lakes and forests—pick up properties in town and out, for recreation, for retirement, for investment. "You should have been around here a couple of years ago," Dee Tucker, a real-estate agent from the nearby town of Cle Elum, told me. "Seattle was booming, and it was 'Come on in and take a number.' This office was like Sunday morning at the pancake house."



Though its residents like to evoke a Cicelian social history—colorful but convivial—Roslyn has in fact never got along with itself very well. Its twenty-four or so nationalities distrusted each other. They drank at separate bars, joined separate fraternal lodges, and buried their dead in a dozen or so ethnically defined cemeteries, which today form an intricate necropolis on the western edge of town: blacks here; -ichs and -vichs there; -ellis and -bellos and -inis here; Masons there; New Knights of Pythias here; Old Knights of Pythias there; Red Men here; Cacciatori D'Africa there.

But, like an isolated post of bored and squabbling soldiers, the town is capable of unanimity if it can turn its attention toward an outside world it considers ugly from the front. It battled strikebreakers in the eighteen-eighties; hippies (the term is still au courant in Roslyn) in the nineteen-seventies; the Burlington Northern Corporation's lumber subsidiary, which attempted to log Roslyn's watershed, in the late nineteen-seventies; and then the coastal rich, whose only contributions to community life, as far as most Roslynites are concerned, have been traffic, sniffy attitudes, and whorehouse property prices.

THOUGH in general the mayor and city council welcomed the film people, it took a New York minute before the dashing CBS newcomers got crossways with Roslyn. The making of a television show is a clumsy, imperfect business. Schedules verge on fiction. When Pipeline Productions—which took over production of the show from Cine-Nevada—heads over Snoqualmie Pass, it brings a cast and crew numbering a hundred, on the average, as well as personal vehicles, equipment trucks and trailers, and a catering van. A film company at work sets up what amounts to an alfresco factory—its cables, cameras, camera dollies, light stands, and risers scattered around like a dog's dinner.

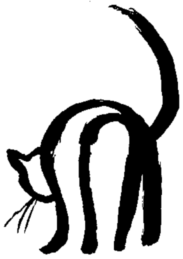
Filming in Roslyn created special problems. Many of the non-human stars of the show—the Brick Tavern, Ruth-Anne's General Store, radio station KBHR, a prominent totem pole, the clapboard storefront office of Dr. Joel Fleischman—are inconveniently located on Pennsylvania Avenue and just a shout away from busy Highway 903. And, of course, there was local traffic—Roslynites driving to the post office (Roslyn doesn't have home delivery), the cafés or taverns, the bank, the hardware store.

Early on, people complained that the crew commandeered too many parking places; that traffic was continually being stopped or rerouted; that a production vehicle pulled onto 903 just as a school bus was unloading children; that people on their way downtown were left waiting "for hours" outside the post office while a scene was shot.

Before too many months of this kind

of thing had passed, Roslynites felt that their guest was outstaying its welcome. And not only was the crew crowding the town but, as the show snuggled into the hearts of America, the numbers of tourists and gawkers increased.

ONE afternoon not long ago, because an important filmic moment was in the making, I stood for the better part of an hour waiting to cross Pennsylvania Avenue and Highway 903 to get to the bank. A pickup truck with a large dead wild ruminant tied across its hood drove a few dozen yards along Pennsylvania, waited for another vehicle to pass it going the opposite way, made a wide turn in the street, and parked in front of KBHR, whereupon the truck's occupants got out and were met by a pair of passersby. The four men stood around and commented on the animal.



The action was repeated half a dozen times. Each time everything was in place for another run-through, a message was relayed to crew members holding walkie-talkie radios, who relayed the word to a pair of red-vested traffic controllers holding stop signs. They stood in the highway and halted traffic. The pickup truck made its run-and-turn-and-stop and the four actors convened. The controllers got a second message, lowered their signs, and waved traffic through. A crowd of about a hundred and fifty tourists clapped and chattered.

Some of the traffic, when it was allowed to roll, did so at a crawl, with drivers and passengers craning right and left, and pointing at banks of lights and cameras, and at the actors themselves. Some drivers kept their eyes straight ahead. One log-truck driver rolled down his window, yelled at crew members, and extended his middle finger. One of the walkie-talkie people watched this and spoke into his microphone. The answer, though distorted, included the words "one more redneck jerkoff." Another message sent the stop signs aloft again.

STEVE MOORE, a potter with the gaunt, vital mien of a long-distance runner, lives in a converted commercial building just off Pennsylvania Avenue. He began to sight crew members poking around his yard, wandering through his garage, lifting apples from his trees, pushing dirt and snow into his lot. "It wasn't one thing, but a series of small violations," he said. "I complained to City Hall and nothing happened. I wrote to the production company, and they apologized. Things were O.K. for a while, the workers polite and conscientious. Then the alley began getting blocked again. I still find trash left around."

Dan Dusek, who, as Pipeline's location manager, is the company's emollient in Roslyn, says that Moore is "the kind of guy who says, 'Hey, you're breathing near my property, those are my molecules.' "

Sometimes filming went on deep into the night. ("That may have happened—we don't walk on water," Dusek told me.) Crew members supposedly filmed on Bobbie Woodell's property without permission. (Not true, according to Dusek. "Not exactly true," Woodell says. "I came home one day and these jokers were taking closeups of my front gate—it was thick with snow. I went by them, and heard one of them say, 'Oh, *great.* Now we've got tracks in the snow.' I walked back and slammed the gate so hard all the snow dropped off.") A pair of antlers was attached to a building front without permission. ("We had the owner's husband's permission," Dusek says.) A crew member was said to have told an eighty-four-year-old woman to "kiss my ass." ("None of us hear so good at eighty-four," says Dusek.)

Rumors fast-walked around town: The writers "burned" one of the characters' houses out of the script because the owner wanted more money. (False, says the owner.) The mayor, the city clerk and her son, certain city councilmen, and the three-person police force had all been on Pipeline's payroll as extras, guards, or gofers. (True.) Pipeline bought off the authorities after a group of actors, including Rob Morrow, who plays Fleischman, ran naked down Pennsylvania Avenue. ("We decided not to prosecute," Jack Denning, the mayor, says. "They donated a couple of thousand dollars to the park fund, and apologized.")

Slow-burn resentment gave rise to a flinty local jargon: The "Northern Exposure" cast and crew are "movie groovies" and "mooseheads." (A moose wanders around a deserted predawn Cicely during the series' opening credits.) The traffic controllers are "hall monitors"; Roslyn is "Mooseville." (Certain residents, without being asked, will put their hands to their temples, with their fingers extended, and wave them—the "moose salute." Then they will laugh and do it again.) "Northern Exposure" tourists are "Looky Lous" or "cleans"—the latter term distinguishing them from garden-variety campers and off-road-vehicle enthusiasts, who are "dirts" and "fluorescent armadillos." Looky Lous from Greater Seattle are "coasties" or "wets" or, because Seattle's area code differs from Roslyn's, "206ers"; visitors from the rest of the known world are "flatlanders."

ON September 24, 1991—eighteen months after "Northern Exposure" adopted Roslyn, and the day after its début (in which it cracked the Nielsen Top Twenty)—Lea Beardsley, who lives a few blocks from downtown Roslyn, presented the city council with a petition of grievance, signed by a hundred and thirty-five of her neighbors. The petition read:

> We, the undersigned, object to the presence of the Northern Exposure film crew in Roslyn. We feel that when they are filming, Roslyn is under siege. . . . [Roslyn's] residents . . . have the right to travel unobstructed city streets, perform banking and post office business at their will, and do business along Pennsylvania Avenue unmolested. Roslyn is not a movie set! As residents here we shall have a voice in conditions and requirements imposed upon the film crew to maintain the integrity of Roslyn.

Then, speaking from typewritten notes, Beardsley amplified her concerns, citing the Steve Moore business, the antlers-placed-without-permission business, the school-bus business, the filming-at-night business, and the kiss-my-ass business. She thought that Roslyn's Special Use Permit, which listed Pipeline's responsibilities, was a loophole-ridden mockery ("written by the city's liaison officer who can't even spell 'liaison' ")—not least because it charged Pipeline a pitiful hundred dollars a day to disrupt an entire town. She accused Mayor Denning and members of the council of kowtowing to Pipeline, and strongly suggested that some of these officials had conflicts of interest. She proposed that the Mayor form a committee to address grievances, rewrite the Special Use Permit, and enforce its provisions—a committee consisting of Roslynites who "have not and will not in future receive payment from the film crew." Mayor Denning refused.

Within a few weeks, the regional and national press checked in: "Too Much Exposure" (Chicago *Tribune*); "Exposure: Roslyn Wrestles with Fame" (Vancouver *Sun*); "Faked Alaska" (*People*); and "Overexposed?" (*The Oregonian*). The climax of this brouhaha was Beardsley's appearance on "Entertainment Tonight," for which she was interviewed standing in front of the Brick Tavern.

"I really wish she hadn't done that interview," Dino Enrico told me. Enrico is Lea's brother and, with Lea and her husband, Roger Beardsley, a co-owner of Roslyn Brewing, the microbrewery, which was begun in 1990. One of its best customers was the Brick. "Jimmy"—Jimmy Luster, the owner of the Brick—"was more than a little pissed. He figured Lea made it look as if the Brick was angry at 'Northern Exposure'—that he was in on the insurrection. He said, 'God damn it, Dino.' I said, 'Jimmy, you ever have a sister?' He said, 'No, and I don't care.' I said, 'We're old friends, man, let's talk.' He said 'No.' I said 'That's bullshit.' He said 'That's Roslyn.' Then he threw the tap handle at me. Two days later, they had Redhook in there."

"MAN, Lea Beardsley got brushed off. For every person that signed her petition, there were three that wanted to. The old people here, the constants, tend to be shy about some things. The Mayor, the downtown businesses—they got this place locked up. We are prisoners, man, in our own town. Crushed by the groovies."

Four of us were sitting in a tavern not far from Roslyn.

"I'll tell you what this place is like now in the summer, but you absolutely no way in hell can use my name. If my boss found out I was badmouthing the groovies he'd fire my ass like a Zippo. It was noon and I headed to town for beans—"

"We'll name you Bud," I said.

Bud's friend said, "His boss did fifty bucks' worth of business with 'em once, and he thinks he's in on the ground floor of the entertainment business."

"We'll call you Butch," I said. "And

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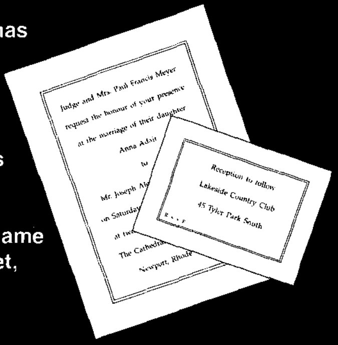

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he's Chuck." I motioned to the fourth member of our party, who was resting his head on the table.

"His boss doesn't care about the neon," Butch explained. "He just has his heart set on being taken *advantage* of on the casting couch."

I bought another round. We lost track of the conversation, because Bud and Butch made me shake their hands and swear that I wouldn't use their names, and then they made me do it again. "This is wartime and we're the resistance," Bud said.

Then Bud remembered the story about the time they filmed the moose—the animal that opens the show. It was three in the morning, and everybody was frantic. "You got to remember," he said gravely, "this show is more important than you can even imagine."

Crews of kids had been enlisted to hold up twelve-foot-high temporary fences at strategic locations to keep the moose from wandering. There were scores of spectators, and banks of lights everywhere. "Pennsylvania Avenue was lit like the bull yard at the state pen," Bud said.

"That moose was high, man," Butch said.

"At first, he was skittish, freaked out," Bud said. "Who wouldn't be? So they tranked him. He loves bananas—they use them as lures—but he was so *merged* on drugs he had lost his appetite."

"Been there," Butch said.

"Anyway, they finally jump-start that poor dumb animal and manage to get him over by the café," Bud said. "He was so rubbery they had to prop him up to get their shot. It was just like Lee Marvin's horse in 'Cat Ballou.' "

"*Just* like 'Cat Ballou,' " Butch said. "*Believe* it, sport."

Then they recited their autobiographies. Then we had another round. Then they told me about a bear used in one episode.

"He looked more rug than bear," Butch said. "Only way that animal could kill you was to gum you to death, or maybe fall asleep on your head."

Then they made me swear I wouldn't repeat their autobiographies. I lost patience, and suggested that we cut to the chase with a blood vow of silence. Butch took out a folding knife, and we all looked at it. Then Bud allowed as how he'd trust me, because I wasn't from Seattle or New York. Butch wondered how they *knew* I wasn't. I reached for my wallet and dropped it on the floor. Then I picked it up and took out my driver's license and said, "There, damn it. Just tell me the story."

Bud and Butch looked at me and said, "What story?"

And I said, "About what it's like in the summer in Roslyn."

"It's not that good of a story," Bud said.

"Yeah, it is," Butch said.

" 'It was noon and I headed to town for beans . . .' " I said.

"Right," Bud said. "It was noon and I headed to town for beans. I have to drive halfway to Tacoma to find a parking place. I walk down Second, and a bunch of Lous from Europe, or maybe Quebec, ask me to take their picture in front of the café mural. So I do. Then they ask me where the moose is. Then they take *my* picture. Then I head down Pennsylvania, which is thick with a thousand Lous. I push my way to the café and have to stand and wait for a table—in *Roslyn!* I order. I reach for my smokes and realize I left 'em in the truck. I stick my head out the door to see if I can dart out and down to Central Sundries without throwing too many wrenches into the Hollywood wheel. The groovies are everywhere—nothing new. And they're just standing around—nothing new, either. I figure the coast is clear. Off I go. I buy my smokes, b.s. a little bit, and walk out. About ten steps later I hear 'Cut! Cut! Cut!' I look over, and this guy is waving his arms, cussing into his walkie-talkie, looking at me like I had asked his sister to pose for *Hustler*. 'Can't you see we're rolling!' he screams. For about half a second—out of habit, I suppose—I felt small. I mean, I'm a workingman and I'm willing to go half out of my way for another workingman, but—the details aren't important, let's just say that I'd rolled out that morning on the wrong side of the car seat. So instead of apologizing I stopped and yelled back, 'No shit! You sons of bitches have been rolling around here for a year and a half!' Went on and ate my lunch. Tell you this, it about made *my* goddam day. Oh, yeah, Dusek finds me a few days later."

"Does Suck," Butch said.

"All apologetic. And he offers to buy my lunch."

"Does Suck's Brown-Nose Special."

LEA ENRICO BEARDSLEY is a high-cheekboned brunette a couple of inches shy of six feet, and a couple of years shy of forty. Her maternal great-great-grandparents arrived in Roslyn in 1889. Lea and her brother grew up in Aberdeen, on the Washington coast, but spent most of every summer in Roslyn. In 1977, she graduated from Mills College, in Oakland, California, with a degree in English literature.

She married Roger Beardsley in 1979, and the two moved to Woodinville, near Seattle, in 1981. Roger, an engineer, and Dino began research into starting a brewery. Construction of the Roslyn Brewing Company—Roger and Dino and Lea were the constructors—began in the spring of 1988, the same year the Beardsleys bought a house in Roslyn.

Beardsley's petition created a furor. Word went out that the petition demanded that "Northern Exposure" leave town; that it had been signed by children and the senile; that Pipeline had formulated plans to build a duplicate Roslyn elsewhere; that the Mayor had passed the petition along to Dan Dusek and Dusek had said, "Don't worry, they'll never find work with us." (Both Denning and Dusek vehemently deny this.)

"Did they think I held people at gunpoint to sign the petition?" Beardsley said to me. "I didn't. People were anxious to sign. We never wanted to kick Pipeline out—we were just asking for some controls, a better deal. Look at this Special Use Permit—the only ones who seem to matter are the merchants. They are notified of street closures and disruptive filming, and they are paid for their inconvenience, *as they should be*, but the merchants aren't the only people in town. I've had to wait the longest times to be allowed into the post office. There are a lot of old people here. Think about being seventy-five years old and waiting in the sun or the cold to finish an errand while fourteen people put makeup on some actress. It isn't fair.

"I remember a town where the kids could go downtown without fear. Everybody knew everybody. Now there's so much traffic, so many strangers. One day, Pipeline will be gone, but the tourists will be coming for years. Think about North Bend and 'Twin Peaks'—they've got tour buses of Japanese coming in daily. What is intolerable is the sycophancy of the Mayor and his cronies. The Mayor worked for them as a guard; Jim Hathaway, on the council—his house is used as a location, for pay. Is that going to affect his vote?" (Hathaway says no.)

"I saw Dusek downtown the other day. I said hello; he said hello back. They've cleaned up their act, I admit. I'd like to think the petition had something to do with that. I've stepped back a bit, but that doesn't mean that I'm not still irritated—irritated that Pipeline can come in and have its way for so cheap; irritated that the Mayor and most of the council think that Pipeline can do no wrong and that any critic is a troublemaker.

"Looking back, I was naïve to believe that money didn't talk here; naïve to think I could crack the old-boy network. There have been repercussions. Mary Andler"—who runs the Roslyn museum—"was like a grandmother to Dino and me. Now she refuses to speak to us. I don't regret what I did, but some people here will never forget. They'll go to their graves remembering me as the woman with the petition."

JACK DENNING has been Roslyn's chief executive since 1983. He likes to point out that he has spoken with "at least two hundred" reporters about "Northern Exposure," and that most of those reporters—he apologizes for his frankness—twisted things all around. A public servant has got to be careful, and that's why he issued a gag order on all city employees, and that's why Mike Mullin, Roslyn's chief of police, won't speak to the press until he gets Jack's O.K.

I mention that Jack's nickname, in some circles, is God, and he says, "Look, if being in political life teaches you one thing, it's that you can't please everybody, and if you try to you'll end up not pleasing anybody."

But we need to get down to business, because Jack hasn't eaten supper yet after his ten-hour shift with the Washington Department of Transportation. Did I know how long and hard a man has to work to raise three kids? "This mayor's job, it pays three hundred a month, but, with all the time I put in, it might as well be a labor of love," he says. "I eat, breathe, and sleep Roslyn."

Lea Beardsley's petition?

He rubs his weathered face (he is fifty-five years old), lifts and re-settles his California Raisins baseball cap. "I look around and see people alive here. People who were here way before the last mine closed, in 1963, people who have lived through this town's depression. Then someone walks in from California waving a petition, a newcomer like Lea Beardsley, saying, 'Keep it like it was.' Well, I tend to get a little short with that. This is a tough town that's gone through tough times, and during those tough times some people weren't here scraping by, they were in California going to college.

"I have nothing against petitions. Petitions are the American way. But, hell, hers was signed by old people who sometimes can't remember yesterday. And it

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was presented like 'My way or the highway.' They wanted that special committee—isn't that what the city council's for? Maybe the Special Use Permit wasn't perfect. But we're learning. Rome wasn't built in a day."

A couple of months after the petition, Roslyn acquired a used fire truck for the bargain-basement price of twelve thousand dollars—a fire truck that Denning had found after months of searching. With great fanfare, Pipeline Productions donated the truck to the city.

"That fire truck is where the petition and all the bad publicity maybe helped," Denning says. "The film people figured, probably to smooth oil on the waters, 'Hell, let's get us a million dollars of free publicity for twelve thousand dollars.' Now people say, 'Well, that truck had to be refitted, and you have to build a new firehouse, because the new truck is too big.' That's gratitude for you. We needed some new storage space anyway.

"Maybe my reaction to the petition is something personal, but we have the chance to enter a boom time here. Used to be we'd have to stretch every dollar seven or eight ways. Maybe next year we'll be down to two or three. Look at our new businesses"—he ticks off the names of several gift shops and a bakery—"and our new jobs." One café added eight people last summer, and the pizza parlor added a dozen or so. Roslynites are working as extras, at fifty dollars a day. "Look at the museum—it's gone from five thousand visitors in 1990 to over thirty thousand in 1992. Busy as hell. I sit here and look you right in the eye and say I don't care if that boom is caused by 'Northern Exposure' or Alcoa Aluminum or the Mustang Ranch."

DAN DUSEK is an extremely personable, well-spoken, and organized man. He is forty-five years old, tall, lanky, and sandy-haired, with a thick, clipped mustache, wire-rim glasses, a soft North Texas accent that fades in and out like a radio station from the next county, and the long face of a hound dog: a face that becomes longer—sorrowfully long, in fact—when people criticize the job that Pipeline Productions has done.

"I just received a new script, so I've been checking in with the places we'll be shooting," he said. "I have a unique and different relationship with each person in this town. Is everything going all right? Any complaints? I've made friends here. I think things were rocky at first. I've done a lot of repair work, smoothed a lot of feathers. That's part of my job.

"I don't understand why Lea Beardsley has such a chip on her shoulder. That business about Denning and other councilmen who have been on our payroll some—I tell you, those same people have chewed my ass out when we've stepped out of line. She thinks a hundred dollars a day to the town is chump change? The permit was up for review and we asked the council if they wanted to change the terms. They voted to leave it the same. If you are selling me a car for a thousand dollars, I'm not gonna say, 'That's too low, here's fifteen hundred.' And I'm not saying that a hundred dollars is too low. They set the price. People think we have bottomless pockets. We don't. Everybody has a budget. Roslyn. Pipeline. Ross Perot.

"Maybe Lea came here with a vision of a quiet little town, away from all the fuss. She has to remember that Roslyn was growing, on the map, a recreational hot spot, before we got on the scene. I guarantee you, no one out there watches the show and says, 'Let's move to Roslyn.'

"My God, the town has come alive. Other towns spend millions trying to attract people, to gain this sort of publicity. We come here and give it to Roslyn on a platter. Our influence has been major, I understand that. My God, there are sometimes two thousand people standing around watching us shoot. There used to be maybe three cars parked on the street, and now it is difficult to park anywhere. But think of it this way: If you build a new water system, you have to dig trenches. If you have a hardware store, you have semis parked in the middle of the street delivering supplies. And both of those happen in Roslyn, by the way.

"What no one understands is that those crowds cause *us* problems. They make extra work for us. We have to herd these people around. But, we can't forget, these are the same people who keep us on the air. So we work around them.

"Look at what we've done: We bought them a fire truck. We sponsored a 10-k race. We filled up holiday food baskets, and nearly every crew member contributed to the Toys for Tots drive. We bought a light bar for the police car. We even contributed to the auction for the new firehouse, with signed photographs and T-shirts. To drive to Roslyn, shoot, stay overnight, and shoot the next day costs us ten thousand dollars over and above what we would spend back at the soundstages. Ten thousand dollars. That's big money."

BOBBIE WOODELL flat out does not care what people think of her. "I'm known as the bitch of town," she told me, not without pride. "I'm an old, fat, short, ugly manic-depressive with cancer and osteoporosis. I don't trust anyone from Ohio or Arkansas. I had a son-in-law who was murdered in Pendleton, Oregon. My son tends bar at the Brick. In the summer, I call him up and say, 'This is your mother. It's ten o'clock at night—turn down that music and shut the front door.'

"Pipeline's left a bus idling right in front of the house. Their filming lights hit smack on my parlor mirror. I gave them a piece of my mind, and Dusek apologized. He's class, but, like I told him, 'Dan, all your cowboys don't wear white hats.'

"Pipeline's presence has changed this town, whether they wanted it to or not. Motive doesn't matter, the end does. I came back to Roslyn from Oregon in 1987, for two reasons—to bury my man, who grew up here, and to be left alone. They won't leave me alone. We got a mayor and a city council and a city clerk who are thick as thieves with these people. I'm watching a person—and I mean Roslyn—die. The businesses aren't dead—Pipeline saw to that—but Roslyn's heart is being torn out. The tourists flock to this television show like pigeons. They use the town, abuse it, throw it away. They go to the bathroom and change baby diapers in the lot next door. Wariness and hostility reign.

" 'This is a new economy, a boom,' people say. You tell me if umpteen gift shops is a new economy. Go to the bank with your minimum wage. I lock my door now. To keep all this progress from breaking and entering. I saw a lady from church the other day, a woman I hadn't seen for a while. She looked so glad to see me, and so sad at the same time. 'Bobbie,' she said. 'Bobbie, what's happened? We've lost our town.'

"They lost me, too. I'm moving out. Gonna put my house up for sale. They want new blood? They got it. I'm not gonna sell my house to anyone but a hippie or a Rajneeshi."

JOE NEILAND is a handyman. He was born and raised in Roslyn (he's forty-four years old) and has been on the city council since 1991. He is a polite, good-natured, soft-spoken man with startlingly blue eyes and the hefty build of a linebacker. He lives with his widowed mother, Victoria—a tall, gray-haired woman with a handsome, Katharine Hepburn face.

"I love the show," he said. "We watch it every week. We have to tape it—Mom falls asleep before it's over. But I'm not a downtown businessman. I'm not an extra. They haven't used this house for a scene, and I have to ask—I did ask—as a city councilman, as a citizen, 'What has "Northern Exposure" done for the common man?' "

Victoria Neiland came into the kitchen from the basement, where she had been washing clothes by hand. "Now, Joseph," she said. "I think it is thrilling to have 'Northern Exposure' here. Thrilling. Oh, I'd never complain. I look at the television and say, 'There's our town!' "

"Mom," Joe said. "I'm not complaining, just wondering. They pay the town, directly, one hundred dollars a day. One hundred dollars. That's the wages, for a day, for two extras. The show has become very popular, very profitable. They'll bring up the ten thousand dollars they spend on location, but at least one-third of that gets spent on lodging, and Roslyn doesn't have any motels."

"I saw that girl, Maggie, on television selling Chevrolets," Victoria added. "And I've seen her right here on our streets."

"That's what I mean, Mom. Everybody's getting paid but Roslyn. One hundred dollars. They take up a lot of space. We have to put in portable latrines. We have crime. They say, 'We *gave* you a fire truck,' but I say, 'Yes, but we *give* you our town.' "

Victoria returned to her washing, and Joe walked me to my car.

"A lot of people in town think like Mom. A lot of people don't. Lea took a beating. That isn't fair—she had the nerve to stand up to people.

"Did you ever see that movie 'The Blob'? That's what's happened to Roslyn. Here we are, living our lives, and someone runs into town saying, 'There's a *thing* heading this way!' And it's a *thing* no one has ever seen before. Once it gets here, no one knows exactly what to do about it. Kill it? Feed it? Tame it?"

TAKING what I could recall of Bud and Butch's advice, I walked from old Roslyn to new, down Pennsylvania Avenue from the locals' bar, the Pastime Tavern, to what has become the visitors' hangout, the Brick.

The Brick, founded in 1889, makes much of its claim to being the oldest tavern in Washington state—or the oldest continuously operated tavern in Washington state, or the oldest continuously operated tavern in the same location in Washington state—and occupies a tall, handsome building on the southwest corner of Pennsylvania and Highway 903. The Pastime, which makes a point of claiming nothing about itself, is a detached wooden rectangle—more worn and utilitarian than the Brick—with a shaded beer garden. It sits a long block east of the Brick.

Except for the running-water trough spittoon at the base of the Brick's bar, and the fact that both places, with their ample displays of "Northern Exposure" action wear, have come to resemble clothing stores, neither place is readily distinguishable from most taverns in the state. They smell of cigarettes and pooled tap beer; the counters are lined with jars of pickled eggs and packages of chips; the bars are long and dark and as worn as cathedral pews. There are dart boards, pool tables, jukeboxes, sports-team schedules, and signs with ancient waggeries: "Our credit manager is Mrs. Helen Waite. If you want credit go to Helen Waite."

The Pastime's clientele dress in flannel shirts and Frisco jeans and suspenders and boots. Clothes are specked with sawdust. Or torn and patched. Skin is stained with grease. Fingers are missing. No one acknowledged me when I walked in. I settled at the bar between a thin, worn man who was seriously drunk

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CHRISTIE'S

and a wide, red-faced man who was seriously drunk.

"What brings you into town, cowboy? Hollywood?" the thin man asked.

"Is that your Jap truck?" the wide man asked.

"Yes," I said to the thin man. "No," I lied to the wide man.

"You work for 'Northern Exposure'? " asked the thin man.

"I just saw you get out of that rice-grinding piece of shit," said the wide man.

"No," I said to the thin man. "It's the wife's," I lied to the wide man. "The Ford's in the shop."

There followed a fifteen-minute exchange during which I more or less established my right to take up space in the Pastime. ("Damn *right* all politicians are crooked," I crowed at one point. "Lying *bastards*.")

We got onto real estate. I ventured that the recent reassessment—it had doubled the previous rate—seemed usurious.

"God damn right it's serious," said the wide man.

Then I asked when he had last been reassessed.

"Wait just a minute. You sound like a politician yourself. Let's just stop right here, Mister. What's your drill? Why don't you come clean?"

I readied to leave, not amused by the general drift of things, when in walked a man in his late twenties, with Eddie Bauer clothes and expensive hair. His hands, like mine, were pink and soft. He worked, I found out, for Pipeline.

He sat around the corner of the bar and ordered a beer. His smile was bright, and his tone of voice, I feared, a bit flush with unearned heartiness.

The barmaid said the seat was taken. He moved down one. The barmaid said that seat was taken. He moved down one more.

My companions were staring at him. They started in. "I'm *so* honored to be drinking with someone in show biz, aren't you?" The wide man blew cigarette smoke toward the newcomer's face. "Arrogant bastards. Show-biz big shots." The guy stared at his beer, silent.

The newcomer left. A beer and a pickled egg later, I did, too.

A HALF-DOZEN drinkers hunched at the Brick's bar; a dozen or so customers sat at nearby tables. The tables were occupied by Canadians, Germans, French, and one Spaniard. The Canadians docilely took a licking on the bartender's impromptu exchange rate. The Germans mocked the size of American beer glasses. The French—two couples in their twenties—stared intently at the door, video cameras ready on the table. Faces appeared against the tavern's windows. Once, the door opened and a large man with a Southern accent asked if he could "take a few feet" with his video camera. The Spaniard, a young man who said he hailed from Málaga ("That's nice," said the bartender), kept returning to the bar.

"Do they make here?" He mimed hand-cranking a camera. "In this place?"

"No. They shoot interiors in Renton, near Seattle."

"No film here ever, no?"

"Yes."

"They are not filming today tonight?"

"That's right."

"When is to film?"

"Maybe two, three days every couple of weeks."

"Does Janine Turner—Maggie—yes?"

"Right."

"She is here?"

"Not right now."

"Is Maggie beautiful in life?"

"She is pretty, yeah."

The man from Málaga smiled and nodded and cupped his hands in front of his chest.

The bartender was a wire-muscled banty with a lined face, a gray beard, a tattoo on one arm, and a missing tooth.

"Do you get many questions like that guy asked?" I asked.

He looked at me as if it were none of my business. He pulled a beer.

"Forty times a day."

"Must get old."

"It's *working* that gets old, man."

YOU might leave here on a Thursday in the rain. The newspapers from the coast are in. The taverns are open. A dog in a vacant lot barks ceaselessly as one tour bus of senior citizens unloads near the museum and another turns onto Pennsylvania Avenue. Logging trucks brake down Highway 903. Four people ask if they are filming today, and when you say they aren't, someone takes your photograph.

A semi is parked in the middle of Pennsylvania Avenue, unloading at Harper's Lumber Company. A pair of old men talk in front of the post office, each holding a thin bundle of mail.

The post-office parking slots read "10 Minute Parking Only 8 A.M. to 6 P.M." The parking slots next to the semi read "Parking for Harper's Customers Only." A sandwich board in front of Central Sundries announces the store's alter ego: "Ruth-Anne's General Store in the CBS Television Network Series Northern Exposure." Nearly every shopwindow features "Northern Exposure" souvenir merchandise. Several have "Rest rooms for Patrons Only" signs.

You walk toward N.W.I.—Northwest Improvement, which was the old company store. The windows are tattooed with neon—green, red, blue. The place looks cheap, as bright as a rough-side gin mill. Its new name is Memory Makers. You try the door. It opens: "Northern Exposure" T-shirts, baseball caps, singlets, sweatshirts, long johns, aprons, satin jackets, Frisbees, postcards, bumper stickers, mugs, shot glasses, thimbles, sewing kits, Super Sippers, key chains, pillboxes, foam-rubber sleeves for soft-drink and beer cans, moose-shaped refrigerator magnets. You read the posted signs: "Please *No* Video Taping Inside Shop," "$20 Minimum on Credit Card Purchases," "Notice—Due to Shoplifting, This Store Is Now Monitored by Cameras."

The owner, Roxy Sherrell—around Roslyn, her last name is usually pronounced "Shrill"—is a busy woman, with a busy head of bright-black hair. You suggest that her signs seem a bit urban in a place like Roslyn.

"Are you kidding me? *Are you kidding me?* You ever see shoppers with video cameras in a K mart? You ever see shoppers with video cameras in Wal-Mart? That sign is there for security reasons. Lots of stores have twenty-dollar minimums on credit-card purchases. I don't like checks—I was getting so many hot checks you wouldn't believe it. Hot checks and shoplifters—that's why it says 'Monitored by Cameras.' Tons of stuff was flying out of here."

A clerk approaches and tries to get Sherrell's attention. The door opens, and four customers enter, then quickly split off in different directions.

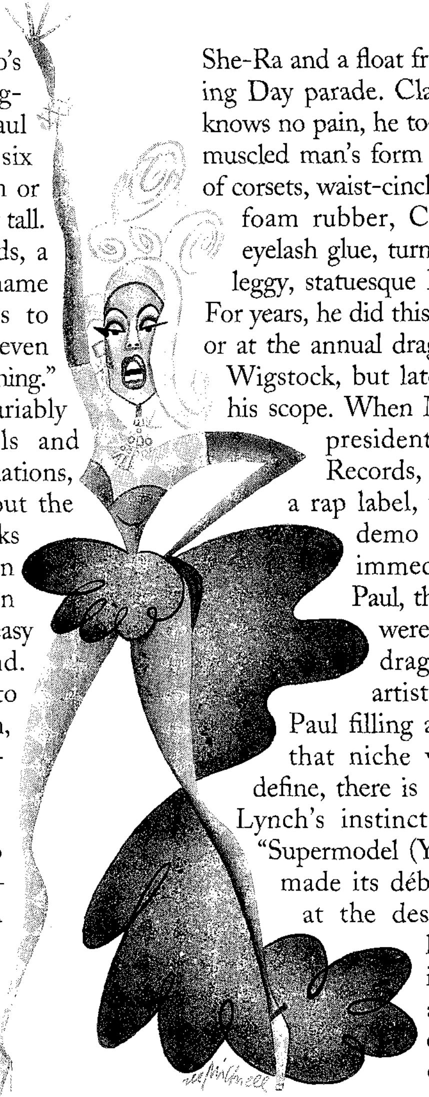
"This may seem like a one-horse town to you, but, believe me, quiet time in Roslyn is long gone. Any more stupid questions, or can I go back to work?" ♦

LETTER FROM DOWNTOWN

CROSS-DRESSER DREAMS

How RuPaul, a black man in a platinum wig and platform heels, captured the imagination of mainstream pop culture.

BY GUY TREBAY



RuPaul: *“Every time I bat my eyelashes, it's a political act.”*

ROBERT DEMICHIELL

DEPENDING on who's doing the exaggerating, RuPaul Andre Charles stands six feet five or six feet seven or six feet nine or seven feet tall. One of his oldest friends, a man who goes by the name of Lady Bunny, refers to RuPaul as “a six-foot-seven monster-model-woman thing.” This, Lady Bunny invariably adds, is without heels and hair. By my own calculations, RuPaul barefoot is about the same height as the Knicks shooting guard John Starks, but the confusion that attaches to him is easy enough to understand. RuPaul lends himself to all kinds of exaggeration, not least the height-fudging that basketball fans call “inching.” When you're talking to RuPaul, it's not unusual to find that you are eye level with the foam-filled, satin-covered prow of his décolletage. His wardrobe, designed by the downtown designers Mathu and Zaldy, runs to what RuPaul calls “total glamour, total excess, total Vegas, total total.”

Almost everything about RuPaul runs to total total. Even when his celebrity was restricted to a small corner of downtown Manhattan, where he performed in the guise of a fictitious blaxploitation legend called StarBooty, he was known as a fantastic creation, not only larger than legend but larger than anyone else in a room. Fully kitted out in a pair of wood-soled platform shoes, RuPaul was a towering presence, somewhere between the cartoon superwoman She-Ra and a float from the Thanksgiving Day parade. Claiming that beauty knows no pain, he took a lithe and well-muscled man's form and, with the help of corsets, waist-cinchers, Ace bandages, foam rubber, Clinique, and Duo eyelash glue, turned it into that of a leggy, statuesque Las Vegas chorine. For years, he did this exclusively in clubs or at the annual drag celebration called Wigstock, but lately he's broadened his scope. When Monica Lynch, the president of Tommy Boy Records, which is primarily a rap label, was sent RuPaul's demo tape, in 1991, she immediately signed RuPaul, theorizing that “there weren't really any other drag-queen recording artists and we saw RuPaul filling a niche.” Although that niche would be hard to define, there is no reason to doubt Lynch's instincts. Since RuPaul's “Supermodel (You Better Work!)” made its début last November, at the designer Todd Oldham's spring showing, it has become an immovable hardcore club hit, one of the videos most often asked for on The Box, a cable-television video-request channel, and a regular feature on MTV—a fact that in itself could make RuPaul the most famous man in a dress since Milton Berle. Early this month, the song moved into the No. 2 spot on *Billboard's* dance chart. As it happens, the tune that kept it from the No. 1 spot was Whitney Houston's cover of “I'm Every Woman.”

OVER the years it took RuPaul to become a fixture in certain parts of Manhattan, his fans could often find him performing at the Pyramid, or the

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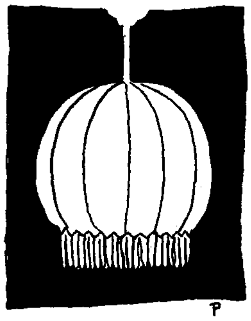
Palace de Beauté, or at one or another of the promoter Susanne Bartsch's clubs or benefits or events, although what exactly RuPaul did by way of performance is open to debate. Dressed sometimes as a "surrealistic cowgirl," sometimes as a Tibetan lama, sometimes as an incarnation of Krishna, sometimes as a Lincoln Tunnel hooker, RuPaul did not really sing or dance much, or lip-synch to records, or mimic the stars. Probably the last term RuPaul would ever use to describe himself is "female impersonator." Even "drag queen" seems a wan phrase in the context of RuPaul. "When I say 'drag,' I don't mean that a woman has to turn into a man, or vice versa," Susanne Bartsch told Holly Brubach in this magazine. "I mean, get your goods out of the closet, you know? In England, it's slang for dressing up." RuPaul goes Bartsch one better by claiming that his role in drag is similar to that of a shaman. "A drag queen is like a priest or a spirit familiar," he once said to me. "We represent the myths, the duality of the universe. We're like little microcosms of the world."



When I first met him, RuPaul was in his StarBooty phase. His wardrobe at the time favored patchwork leather miniskirts, tube tops, and platform-soled thigh boots, and his face was unfailingly framed by the curly nimbus of a huge Afro wig. Back then, RuPaul was given to uttering non sequiturs that might have been snatched from one of Pam Grier's blaxploitation classics. "Don't let your mouth write checks your ass can't cash," he might say, or "Go on with your bad self!" In those days (the late eighties), RuPaul liked to boast of having completed the third volume of an autobiographical trilogy, a book titled "Give It to Me One More Time." In his telling, the first installment was "Your Guide to Health, Beauty, and Nigger Love," succeeded by "New York Is a Big Fat Greasy Ho." While none of these works actually existed, except as notions, they formed a part of RuPaul's inventive résumé and, as such, were almost as good as real. "Self-invention is the essence of pop," Fenton Bailey, one of RuPaul's producers, once remarked to me. "It's an extended exercise in surface. RuPaul has always invented himself as he goes along. It's a reflexive thing. He gives you the recipe as he's baking the cake."

A young Oxonian who came to the United States in 1982 as a Harkness Fellow, Fenton Bailey is half of the Pop Tarts (a.k.a. the Fabulous Pop Tarts), a duo whose latest CD is called "Gagging on the Lovely Extravaganza." The other half is Randy Barbato. Bailey and Barbato also direct the production company World of Wonder, and it was they who came up with the video for RuPaul's début. The consensus among record-industry people is that RuPaul's video will propel him out of the East Village demimonde and onto the main stage of American life. "The video proves that there's really nothing he's not capable of," Monica Lynch says. "A variety show, a game show, a sitcom. We've even thought about RuPaul dolls, if we could decide whether to make them anatomically correct." "Supermodel" is narrated by LaWanda Page, who portrayed Aunt Esther on "Sanford and Son," and follows the trajectory of a young black girl's giddy career as she arrives in Manhattan from Detroit and experiences overnight runway and editorial stardom, followed by encompassing world fame, a trillion-dollar modelling contract, some twenty costume changes, and six blond wigs, before suffering a theatrically necessary nervous collapse. Dressed at first in a cheesy fur car coat, RuPaul is seen posing for fashion spreads on car hoods, on rooftops, outside a Winnebago, and with a terrier, in the Pulitzer fountain near the Plaza, and is also seen playing basketball on a Houston Street court wearing a striped jersey midcalf sheath dress and patent-leather spike heels. In addition, he appears in the video as the cover model for magazines called *Drague*, *Sashay*, and *Ms. Thing*. With all its allusions to model-world bitchery and to the claw-your-way-to-success conventions of Grade B films, the "Supermodel" video could easily be seen as the apotheosis of a certain kind of camp if not for the fact that the spoof is at some level affectionate and the sentiments are heartfelt.

Among drag queens, it's common to distinguish oneself with a word or a phrase; the phrase RuPaul uses on his hit—"You better work, bitch!"—is an unapologetic swipe from the vogue-ball queens. "When the kids at the balls saw something that was fabulous or something that was working their nerves," RuPaul once explained, "they'd give a big finger snap and say, 'You better work!' " When drag queens appear on a drag-ball runway, members of their claques will also sometimes shout encouragement in fractured French. The infectious refrain on RuPaul's video is "Sashay, shanté." It wasn't until recently, when I came upon a local college hockey team singing "Supermodel" in the Eighth Street subway station, that I had any real sense of just how far in the direction of mainstream weirdness the culture had come. As the uptown R train pulled in, the goalie tossed his hands in the air and lisped, "Sashay, shanté."

ON a frigid winter evening, I find myself in a Varick Street loft that serves as the offices of World of Wonder. Earlier in the day, I accompanied RuPaul to the taping of a guest appearance on "Power Play," an independent video show whose studios are located above a neighborhood bar in a grungy part of Newark. "Is this where they have the car jackings?" RuPaul asked as our driver, a Russian émigré, circled through the deserted streets in bafflement. No one seemed to know where we were, and when the driver finally agreed to lower his window and ask directions from a matron in an adjacent car, the woman took one look at us and hit the gas. "Maybe I should do a video about a gang of car-jacking drag queens," RuPaul said.

Now, back in Manhattan, RuPaul has darted into a bedroom in order to change wigs and refresh his makeup for an interview with a gay-cable-news program. For a brief time two years ago, RuPaul worked as an on-air reporter for "Manhattan Cable," a show that World of Wonder produced for England's Channel Four. Fenton has promised to show me the clips. Sleepy-eyed and unhurried—despite the fact that he's throwing his annual party at the loft tonight—Fenton cues up the three segments I've asked about: RuPaul interviewing the Rockettes, RuPaul reporting on black Barbies, and RuPaul interviewing the transvestite hookers on West Fourteenth Street.

"We always thought when we did the

Pop Tarts that it would be great to have a drag queen at the top of the charts," Fenton remarks as he fiddles with the VCR. "It's iconoclastic in one way, but in another it's perfectly pop. Ru was always the logical choice, because he's media-ready, perfectly adapted to TV. Also, he'd been the queen of Manhattan for some time, and he was ready to take it someplace else."

For anyone who's ever met the drag RuPaul, a greater shock is encountering him dressed as a man. "People pass me right by without that wig," he says. The drag RuPaul has a uniform *caffè-latte* complexion; wide-set eyes beneath brows that arch in perpetual question, and a set of large, ferociously even teeth. Beneath the volutes and tendrils of his many platinum-blond hairpieces, he is an ageless (he admits to twenty-seven, but friends insist this is years shy of the truth) and unquestionable beauty. Out of drag, RuPaul is just a pleasant-looking freckled bald man with an earnest smile.

The RuPaul who appears in two of the three taped clips resembles any number of male TV reporters—animated, and with a knack for filling the air, but ultimately forgettable. It's only in the last segment, when he appears in drag, that he takes on an extra psychic dimension. With its scrambled voices, black-barred eyes, and grating pathos, the hooker interview may be one of the enduring clichés of network sweeps weeks. You would think the genre was utterly exhausted, and yet, as the tape runs, it becomes clear that RuPaul has found an honest new angle. His shimmering lips pursed in consternation, he brings to the enterprise an unusual sympathy for these street people, with their cheap wigs, their bad teeth, and their rabbit-fur coats. They respond to his questions with candor, revealing their ambitions, their terrors, their prices, their makeup tips. Several people who've been milling around the loft now wander over to the set and stand staring as RuPaul teeters across the cobblestone streets of Gansevoort Market, past the loading docks and the meathooks and the whores themselves, and onto the corner of Little West Twelfth Street, where the camera's zoom lens catches him opening the door of a dark sedan as it pulls up to the curb.

"How many reporters would do

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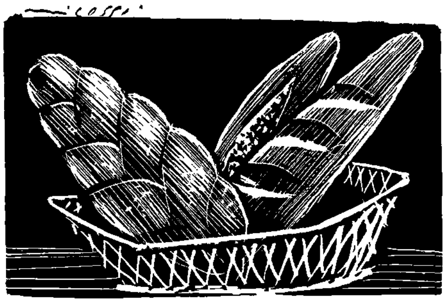
that?" Fenton asks. He means put on a dress to get the news. The more pertinent question, of course, is: How many reporters would end an interview with transvestite hookers by going out and turning a trick? "That was entirely Ru's idea," Fenton says. "I don't think he really went through with it. But he did get in the car."

"I ALWAYS say you're born naked and the rest is drag," RuPaul tells me one evening in late autumn. We're sitting in a recording studio in the Battery Park City apartment of the producer Eric Kupper. One wall is papered with the covers from novelty albums by TV personalities ("Hogan's Heroes Sing the Best of WWII," "Goober Sings") and comedians and people who, Kupper says, "should never have made a record in the first place." The rest of the room is given over to blinking banks of recording equipment. RuPaul has on khaki trousers and a gray hooded sweatshirt zippered over a white button-down shirt. A green baseball cap is cocked at a jaunty angle on his freshly shaved skull. The faint pouches below his eyes are a result of a schedule that has had him in two cities a day for several weeks. (Last night was Toronto, tomorrow is L.A.) His bemused expression is a more or less permanent feature.

The only boy in a family of four children, RuPaul was born in New Orleans and lived in San Diego until he was fifteen. His father (a beauty-supply-store operator) and his mother divorced when he was six. Nine years later, he and his older sister, Renetta, moved to Atlanta. In Atlanta, RuPaul attended the Northside High School of the Performing Arts—"a 'Fame' kind of school, full of robot, Broadway-bound kids," he says. "My life was very dimensional at home," he goes on. "I was a middle child, a social studier. In school, I was kind of alien to every group. I wanted to be noticed, but I was perpetually an outsider. And I stayed an outsider until the day I decided to get into drag." It seems odd now to suggest that there was ever a golden age of drag, but, if there was, it was the nineteen-eighties, and Atlanta was, by most accounts, the place. (There are, however, those who may remember with some fondness New York in the seventies, when Candy Darling, Jackie Curtis, the Cockettes, the Ridiculous Theatrical Company, the Angels of Light, and Divine held sway.) "It was drag heaven," Lady Bunny once told me. "In the early eighties, midtown Atlanta was a very gay scene. They had transvestite hookers all over the streets day and night. When we started out, the Southern queens were deadly serious, without a shred of humor. They were doing Top Forty songs and Melissa Manchester covers, or else they were these out-there redneck-type drag queens, with names like Brittany Fairchild and Sable Shepherd. Unfortunately, all that's gone now. But that's how Ru and all us Southern queens got our start—making fun of all that."

Although Lady Bunny now refers to the style as "a Communist plot," grunge drag was the preferred fashion among the "art kids" of Atlanta—a group that included RuPaul, of course, and also the promoter Larry Tee, and a drag queen called LaHoma Van Zandt, who styled himself after the dithering girl singers in the Swedish group Abba and was given to squealing "Yaay!" Along with LaHoma, Lady Bunny, and Larry Tee, RuPaul made a series of super-8 movies ("Terror," "Terror I," and "Terror II") about an axe-wielding maniac who menaces an apartment complex; appeared on a cable-television show called "The American Music Show" (RuPaul wearing a Mohawk and dressed in a sailor suit); and appeared with a band called the Now Explosion, which, Larry Tee says, "tried to be black as we could make ourselves, which wasn't very black."

In 1984, the Pyramid, a dive on Avenue A that was a center of the East Village gay scene and a mecca for outrageous drag, arranged to have the Atlanta contingent come North to perform. Lady Bunny recalls that on the drive North, with RuPaul at the wheel, they decided to stop in Washington to hit the Goodwill thrift shops. Although Lady Bunny's persona eventually chrysalized into a creature who favors garish spangled dresses and "I Dream of Jeannie" coiffures, in the early years he tended to dress down. "I was in gingham drag and these sorry little flats," he says. "And Ru and everybody went off and told me to meet them at the van. The wind was blowing so hard my wig was about to fly off my head. I hadn't discovered bobby pins yet. It's a moment for my movie: Bunny alone in Washington, D.C., in gingham drag, in tears. I want Claudia Schiffer to play the part."



The Now Explosion, with RuPaul as their guest star, played the Pyramid and the Limelight—"when Limelight was hip the first time," according to Larry Tee—and became indispensable fixtures on the night-life circuit. "For a while, you couldn't really have a club opening without them," says Michael Musto, who relentlessly covered the drag scene in his column for the *Village Voice*. RuPaul made an appearance in the video of the B-52's hit "Love Shack," doing the Frug in a flowered minidress and a monster Afro at the "shaque d'amour." He cut an album called "RuPaul Is StarBooty: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack" on the Funtone label. "Still," Larry Tee explains, "the feeling about drag was you could do cameos, but you couldn't get the concept across the finish line. That's what's great about Ru. He's a drag queen straight people can enjoy."

RuPaul had already formed, and dissolved, two singing groups—RuPaul and the U-Hauls, and Wee Wee Pole—when, in the mid-eighties, while he was still performing with the Now Explosion, a friend suggested that he try "super-glamour" drag. "The reaction was instantaneous," he says. "Before that, it was grunge drag—a smear of eye-shadow, maybe a dress, and combat boots. I put on the heels and suddenly I was a god. Or a goddess. And that was a real turnaround. Back in Atlanta, I'd messed with all kinds of personalities: Elvis, farm animals, androgyny, jungle looks, a giant bunny rabbit. By the time I came to New York, I knew I was a fierce drag queen. When I hit the city, I just pumped up the volume with a tighter corset and higher heels."

Once, in conversation, Tommy Boy's Monica Lynch compared RuPaul to Big Bird. "He's so harmless," she said. RuPaul himself has claimed to be "just a clown in paint and costumes." But, while he may have managed to will himself out of the drag ghetto, he hasn't entirely eluded issues of sexuality and of race. RuPaul is no Muppet or Bozo. He is not, for that matter, Flip Wilson's Geraldine. No amount of celebrity can obscure the contradictions of a black man achieving success by dressing as a woman, and not just any kind of woman but a blonde.

"I'm aware of all that," he tells me now, in the studio, as Kupper prepares to remix RuPaul's next song, "House of Love." "I'm black, male, at the bottom of the social heap," he says. "I'm castrated in drag. But I'm also freed. There's a sort of cultural Judgment Day going on. Everybody's been forced to come out of the closet, in all kinds of ways, not just sexually. And when they get out I'm here to tell them, 'Smile, laugh, welcome to the party!' I preach, honey. I'm the first Number One drag-queen preacher. I don't know how the Pat Buchanans of the world will take me, but what's important is that I'm out there. Every time I bat my eyelashes, it's a political act."

"IT'S the armed guard of the drag revolution," Lady Bunny purrs at seven o'clock one snapping-cold morning. Bunny has just arrived for a taping of "The Joan Rivers Show" at the CBS studios, on West Fifty-seventh Street. The President of Turkey is being interviewed, in a separate studio; consequently, the sidewalks west of Tenth Avenue are thick with security men wearing earpieces and dark suits. The theme of the Rivers show is "Men Who've Become Superstars as Women," and the guests will include—besides Lady Bunny—the lip-synching drag queen Lypsinka, the performance artist Joey Arias, a personality known as Miss Guy, the Warhol star Holly Woodlawn, and RuPaul. In a fourth-floor dressing room, Lady Bunny, standing wigless in full makeup, and wearing bluejeans and black Dr. Martens shoes, looks like a cross-dressing nerd. Other people sit in barber chairs awaiting transformation. Joey Arias outlines his thin lips with black pencil, fills them in, and then abruptly strips off his torn T-shirt to reveal a muscular chest and two chrome nipple rings. In the far corner, Miss Guy bends over as a hairdresser back-combs his mane. The hairdresser, who's wearing a pants suit and very tall platform

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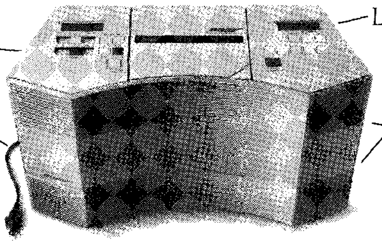

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shoes, makes a special point of telling me that she's "a real girl."

"You turn on any talk show these days and they're doing drag queens of some sort," Lady Bunny says, sighing. "Drag queens who impersonate celebrities, drag queens who marry and have kids, drag queens who have sex changes. Maybe the sexual revolution has something to do with it, and alternative sex roles." Lady Bunny mentions "Paris Is Burning," Dame Edna Everage, and the fact that Lypsinka has posed for Gap ads in drag. He doesn't fail to mention that he was recently invited to appear on the Montel Williams show for a half-hour segment devoted to men who have plastic surgery to look like Dionne Warwick. "They wanted me to make fun of it," Lady Bunny says. "But I didn't want to. The way I see it, if a queen wants to butcher her face any way she sees fit, that's her business."

In a cubicle down the hall, RuPaul is having some finishing touches applied by Mathu Andersen, the twenty-seven-year-old Australian stylist who, along with his partner Zaldy, has concocted RuPaul's look. It takes three hours of intense effort to render RuPaul a woman, and, although the Supermodel persona is ironic, RuPaul takes his makeup seriously enough so that he had a rider inserted in his recording contract stipulating a subscription to *Women's Wear Daily* and *Allure.* Once, riding with RuPaul in a stretch limo, I suddenly noticed the smoothness of his forearms. "There's something I've been meaning to ask you," I said.

"What's that?"

"Waxing or shaving?"

"Oh, shaving, honey," RuPaul replied tartly. "I'm a man underneath all this drag, and there's a lot of hair."

Only Mathu is allowed in the room when RuPaul dons the rubberized "cheater" panties that many drag queens use to conceal their genitals. Once these are in place, he'll slip a filmy white chiffon dress over a sheer white unitard. "The neckpiece is the important part," Mathu says of the gown, which features a high collar ornamented with large pendant pearls and paillettes. (Wood-soled platform mules and a blond cascade will come later.) As RuPaul readies himself, a young assistant from World of Wonder remarks that "Ru speaks fluent TV." It goes without saying that she means television, and not transvestite. "His whole thing is not a play on divahood," she says. "It's a play on celebrity."

Just then, Scott Currie, the associate producer of "The Joan Rivers Show," arrives, wearing a red bow tie, gray flannel trousers, and an orangy tan. Currie is accompanied by David Dangle, the creative director of the Joan Rivers jewelry collection. RuPaul has requested some Joan Rivers jewelry to wear on the show, and Dangle has brought along a tasteful selection: several necklaces and some discreet bow earrings.

"Do you have anything big?" RuPaul asks hopefully.

"Big earrings are not really our moment," Dangle says. "But if these are too small for you to wear, we would understand."

A sign above the Joan Rivers set which reads "CBS Sports Control NFL Today" is now partly obscured by the walls of Joan Rivers' living room. Two chintz-upholstered chairs face the audience across a glass-topped table, and daffodils are arranged in baskets on several side tables. The over-all impression is of a suburban Connecticut solarium where a drag queen might drop by for coffee at any time. Lypsinka is the first to appear. He performs his trademark monologue—a series of snippets from movies, most featuring women who are desperate, drunk, or going insane, with a ringing telephone providing the bridge between bits.

Standing in the wings, RuPaul sips water from a plastic cup. Because of the crotch tuck, there had been a tense moment about where to stow the body mike. "I'd rather not have one of those Paula Abdul things," RuPaul said. In the end, he settled for a hand-held mike and a smooth pantie line. Now, as RuPaul waits to go on, I am suddenly struck by the fact that he seems both colossal and surprisingly fragile beneath the carapace of drag. As if he sensed what I'm thinking, he says, "At one point, when I do the thing I do, I know people are looking at me, everyone's staring. But it's not me. It's the 'thing' people are looking at. And I can stand outside it."

When he strides onstage, however, RuPaul Andre Charles inhabits RuPaul, the Supermodel of the World, completely, smiling his cowcatcher smile and recasting his most burnished anecdotes in fresh, telegenic bites. Leaning close, so that his large head is level with Rivers' tiny one, RuPaul informs her that our bodies are drag to our souls; that attitude is more important than beauty; that he is attracted to people who make it through adversity ("Diana Ross and Whoopi Goldberg, and . . . you, Joan"); and that he comes from a family of fourteen, which is only a partial fib, if you count all his immediate relatives on both sides.

"Are your sisters half as good-looking?" Rivers asks.

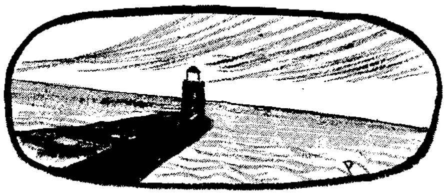
"No. They're all jealous," he says.

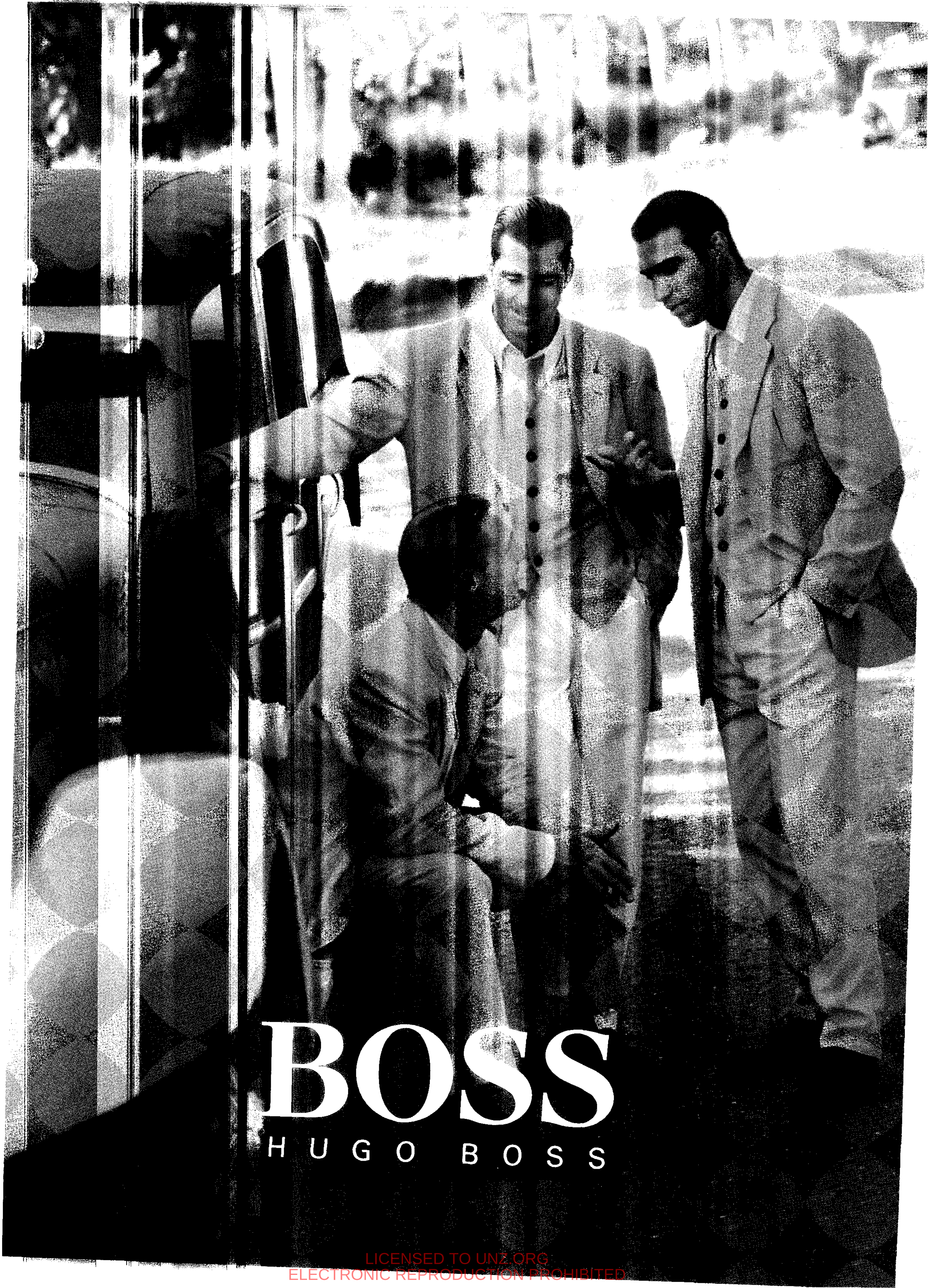
"Well," Rivers says, "if you stood next to me at a party, you'd certainly win."

Then RuPaul swivels to face the audience and insists that everybody say "Love." Everybody does. "Everybody say 'Love,' " RuPaul repeats, and the crowd again complies. With a loud finger snap, RuPaul says, "Now put that in your Joey Buttafuoco butt and get on outta here!"

Back in the limousine, en route to another appearance, RuPaul folds himself into a corner with his wig in his lap. "Joan looked like tissue paper wrapped around a pipe cleaner," Mathu remarks to RuPaul, who's looking distractedly at the Hudson as the car moves south. "You know," RuPaul says, "they'll probably use Miss Guy." He means that his Joey Buttafuoco line won't make it onto "Talk Soup," a talk-show digest that runs on cable TV at the end of each day. When Joan Rivers asked the assembled drag queens if they still had their penises, Miss Guy shot back, "Do you still have your penis, Joan?" It was the kind of bitchery that RuPaul associates with "old-fashioned" drag queens, the kind who "were squelched and smeared and when they got some power they wanted to get back at the world."

"I'm not with them, I'm not with them," a janitor muttered as RuPaul lugged his massive suitcase to the street, past a "Geraldo" audience that seemed delighted by the strange apparition. When I mention the janitor's remark to RuPaul, he purses his lips and gives me a quizzical look. "Well, honey," he says. "He better get his ass on this boat while he still has the chance." ♦

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THE WAR FOR BABY CLAUSEN

After placing her baby daughter for adoption with Robby and Jan DeBoer, Cara Clausen joined an anti-adoption group that helped her fight to win her back. And while the ensuing two-year legal battle has challenged inadequate adoption laws in two states, no party will emerge unscathed—especially the child in the middle.

BY LUCINDA FRANKS

On February 8, 1991, at 7:02 A.M., a baby girl was born in St. Luke's Hospital, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, who was normal in every way. The woman who gave birth to her—Cara Clausen, aged twenty-eight—rocked and fed her, uncurled her fists to marvel at the long fingers, so much like her own, whispered "I love you, Baby Boo" over and over, and, forty hours later, gave her up for adoption.

Four hundred miles away, in the university town of Ann Arbor, Michigan, another woman—Roberta DeBoer, aged thirty-three—could barely contain herself. Four months earlier, she had had a hysterectomy, and now it seemed she was having a baby. "Jan, we could have this little girl, this little baby girl!" she said to her thirty-eight-year-old Dutch-born husband. Robby cleaned their house from cellar to attic, polished its oak antiques, washed their big yellow dog, and indulged herself in a need—akin to the craving of a pregnant woman for some odd morsel—to go out in a blizzard and buy matching pink tights for herself and her infant daughter-to-be. But mostly she waited by the phone, as she had waited many times in the past. For ten years now, the news had been bad: No, she was not pregnant after all. No, the state-licensed agencies (the only sanctioned avenue for adoption in Michigan) still had no baby for the couple—perhaps next year, or maybe in five years. But now her cousins in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where private adoption is legal, had learned of a baby for them.

Two days later, in Cedar Rapids, Cara Clausen gathered up her belongings and left St. Luke's Hospital. She was anxious to get back to her parents' house, in Blairstown—a farm community, thirty miles southwest of Cedar Rapids, that had one grocery, a café, four churches, and six hundred and ninety-five people. In the winter, she could look out her window and see the land stretch on forever. She could watch her father drive off in his oil-tank wagon through the wilderness of white—past the cornstalks bent like old men in the snow, past the snug farmhouses and the hay bales and the signs reading "Blood of Jesus / Eternal Life"—until he seemed to melt into the sky. She had always dreamed of raising children in this house, where she had been brought up, with its orderly, old-fashioned comfort. She had dreamed of having her own family and of being respected in the community, like her father, Shorty Clausen, who was one of the town's most popular civic leaders. But when she got pregnant she was unmarried, and overcome with shame. At first, she denied her pregnancy, and then she hid it, wearing baggy sweaters and complaining that she had gone and gained weight again. Gossip was such a prized commodity in Blairstown that sometimes you didn't dare breathe. "Earlene, I think Cara's pregnant," Shorty finally said to his wife, but Earlene thought there were certain things you didn't talk about. She just ignored what she knew.

Cara and Dan Schmidt seek the return of the daughter they call Anna. One member of Concerned United Birthparents asked Cara, "Did the social worker ever tell you what it will feel like never to hear her first footstep?"

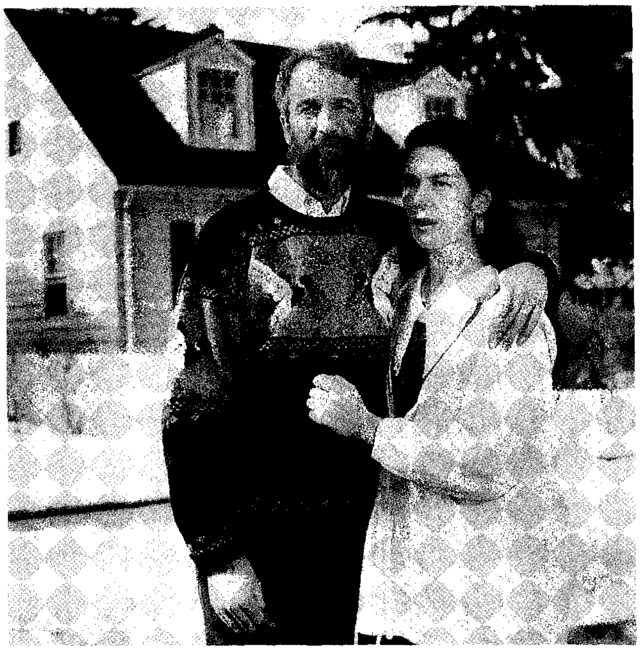
A few days before the baby was due, Cara told her parents that she was going to place it for adoption. Earlene wept and pleaded, but Cara would not budge. She had already put everything in order. She had arranged for the family physician to find a good adoptive couple, and she had trained two co-workers at the trucking company where she worked to do her job for the week she would have to be away. People in her family seldom made mistakes and all she wanted was for this one to be over with.

Cara's mother was with her in the delivery room. When her father, a man of painfully few words, came to the hospital to pick her up, the baby was still in her room and Cara asked him if he wanted to hold his granddaughter. He turned to the window and said "No." His response went through her like a knife.

On February 14th, Valentine's Day, the DeBoers got the call they had been waiting for. The initial paperwork had been done; Cara Clausen's baby was almost theirs. Cara had named the father, and he had also signed away his parental rights, making the prospective adoption even more secure. Robby and her mother got in her blue Oldsmobile and drove through heavy snow to Iowa. There, friends of Robby had taken temporary custody of Baby Girl Clausen, whom they called Sweetheart. They were fussing over her, zooming in with a video camera on her every move, exclaiming over how much she had the look of her new family, how her round cheeks and dark hair resembled Robby's. And then Robby walked in, to a chorus of cheers.

"Oh, my God! You do look like me! Oh, my God! I just can't believe you!" Robby exclaimed as she took the baby in her arms, laughing and weeping all at once. "You are so beautiful. How could she ever have given you up?" The infant gazed at her, seemed to smile, and then began to mouth at her breast. "I knew that I would know your name when I saw you," Robby whispered, her hair brushing the baby's cheek. "Your name is Jessica—Jessica Anne DeBoer." Jan, taking time off from work, joined his wife in Cedar Rapids. The caution he had felt, born of a decade of disappointments, melted when he saw his new daughter. The DeBoers had retained one of Cedar Rapids' most respected lawyers, a man named John Monroe, and he reported that Cara, despite her mother's distress, stood firm in her decision. During the nights, Robby woke frequently, not only to feed Jessica but also to stare at her. "Jan, she feels like such a part of me," she said. "Maybe in some mystical way she *is* mine. Maybe she was just destined to grow inside another woman's womb."

In Blairstown, meanwhile, Cara Clausen's single-minded resolve had given way to inconsolable weeping. Not only was she suffering from post-partum depression but, like most women who choose adoption, she was also in mourning. Cara had a slim athletic build, straight honey-colored hair, a ski-jump nose, and a mouth that assumed a variety of bemused expressions. Now she barely had the energy to wash her hair; she would come home from work, fall asleep on the couch, and stay there until her father woke her and told her to go to bed. After making a big mistake, she had told a big lie. The man who had signed the paternal release, a lanky fair-haired trucker named Scott Seefeldt, had given her a diamond engagement ring, but he had been completely uninterested in the baby, and had taken a job in North Carolina, leaving her to deal with her final months of pregnancy alone. But, in truth, he had had nothing to do with conceiving this dark-haired infant. Even Earlene had seen that. The father of Cara's child was actually Scott's rival at work, a six-foot-four-inch, two-hundred-and-seventy-five-pound thirty-nine-year-old trucker named Daniel Schmidt, whom Cara had been dating nine months earlier—a man from whom Scott had stolen her away. Dan had a big moon face and black hair, and the baby looked just like him.



AMY ARBUS

Robby and Jan DeBoer have cared for Cara's daughter since her birth. They claim that returning the child to the Schmidts now would seriously traumatize her. "I have to keep in my mind," Robby says, "that we will recover from this, but she won't."

On February 25th, Jessica's umbilical cord fell off. Robby took it as a sign: that day, a court hearing was held officially terminating Cara's parental rights. It was the last time Cara could have changed her mind, and she had waived her right to appear. "Jessica Anne is ours. Today at 9:02 A.M.," Robby wrote in her diary that evening. "What a relief. I can't believe it's true. . . . We're sending out cards. Happy Happy Happy. Supposed to meet Cara Clausen tonight but she said it would be too hard. We agreed."

Instead, Cara wrote to the DeBoers:

> I wanted to write so many things in this letter but it is still so painful for me. There isn't a minute that goes by I don't think of Jessica and I will for a long time to come. I try to find comfort in the thought that my pain brought some very blessed people joy and happiness. This doesn't always help. . . . I want her to have the kind of childhood I had. Not only filled with love but also never needing or wanting. I just want her to have all the opportunities I may not have been able to offer. Please let her know I will always love her—she was never unwanted. I know you will treasure her and surround her with love, support her, encourage her to dream, to reach for the stars. . . . God Bless and Keep You All.

On February 27th, Cara, who was back at work, met Dan Schmidt, just before he set out to make a delivery to Cincinnati, and told him that she had borne his child and given it away. She told her mother that she hated herself and wanted Dan to hate her, too. She showed him pictures. "She looks just like you, Dan, without the mustache," she said. He was so upset that he had trouble driving to Ohio, and asked the company to get him a load coming right home. Why hadn't Cara told him about the baby before? Had she thought he wouldn't step forward? He called her and arranged a meeting, but then stood her up and went on the road again.

By March 1st, the DeBoers had filed the necessary adoption petition. They had been designated Jessica's legal custodians and had received permission from the State of Iowa to take her to Michigan. Jan sighed with relief; he had been reared in a traditional European family, where ethics and honesty were paramount; it was important to him to start his own family according to the rules. In just six months, the adoption would become final. Jan DeBoer drove his wife and new baby home to Ann Arbor.

After work on March 4th, Cara Clausen went to a meeting of Concerned United Birthparents, a self-help group that she had seen advertised in the local paper. She went hoping to get reassurance and support. She was fragile; she felt guilty. Had she really made the right decision? Hours later, she walked out of the meeting, in a state of deep agitation. The group was not at all what she had expected. She now felt entirely different about everything that had happened.

The events of that night would change forever the future of the child she had given birth to, and also the future of laws that favor the rights of those who produce children over those who only nurture them. The events of that night would tear at two families, pit one state against another, and challenge a legal system that had failed to protect either birth parents or adoptive parents, and had long sacrificed the rights of children for the sake of adults' entitlement. By the child's second birthday, she would be in an unprotected limbo, treated by the courts not as a person but as a disputed possession. She would have no legal mother, no legal name, and no suspicion as she grew and played that her world could topple at any moment.

CONCERNED UNITED BIRTHPARENTS, known as CUB, is a secretive radical organization that was founded in 1976 by birth parents who had experienced such devastating pain after placing their babies for adoption that they felt the only way they could go on was to search for them. They were furious at a system that they saw as having first forced them to give up their children and then severed all contact with them. "As birth mothers, we were just used and thrown away," says CUB's vice-president, a woman of forty-five named Carole Anderson, who, like many of the other CUB members, placed her baby, a son, because she was young (nineteen), unmarried, and without the family encouragement or financial resources she believed she would need in order to rear a child by herself. "Society told us that we didn't deserve to be mothers and that we would be punished—they would steal our children's adoption records from us, as if we were such beasts that it would be dangerous for our children to know us," she says.

CUB's headquarters is in Des Moines, Iowa, and it has seventeen chapters across the United States, with some three thousand members. CUB would like to see the current form of adoption abolished; its members lobby Congress to transform adoption into a form of foster care under which, in Anderson's words, "there would be no pretending that the guardians who care for and love the child are the real 'parents.'" In the short term, however, CUB has backed legislative initiatives seeking to unseal records in closed adoptions. CUB is aligned with hundreds of other "search" groups, encompassing thousands of birth parents who believe, with CUB, that closed adoption is one of the greatest social evils of modern times. Although the groups have different names—there are Help Us Regain the Children, in Brooklyn, and Bonding by Blood, in Vassar, Michigan, and Finders Keepers, in Bear, Delaware, for instance—most have similar crusades. They include trying to prevent pregnant women from choosing adoption, helping those who have relinquished custody to regain it, encouraging women to track down and make contact with offspring of any age who were placed for adoption, and helping adult adoptees search out their biological parents.

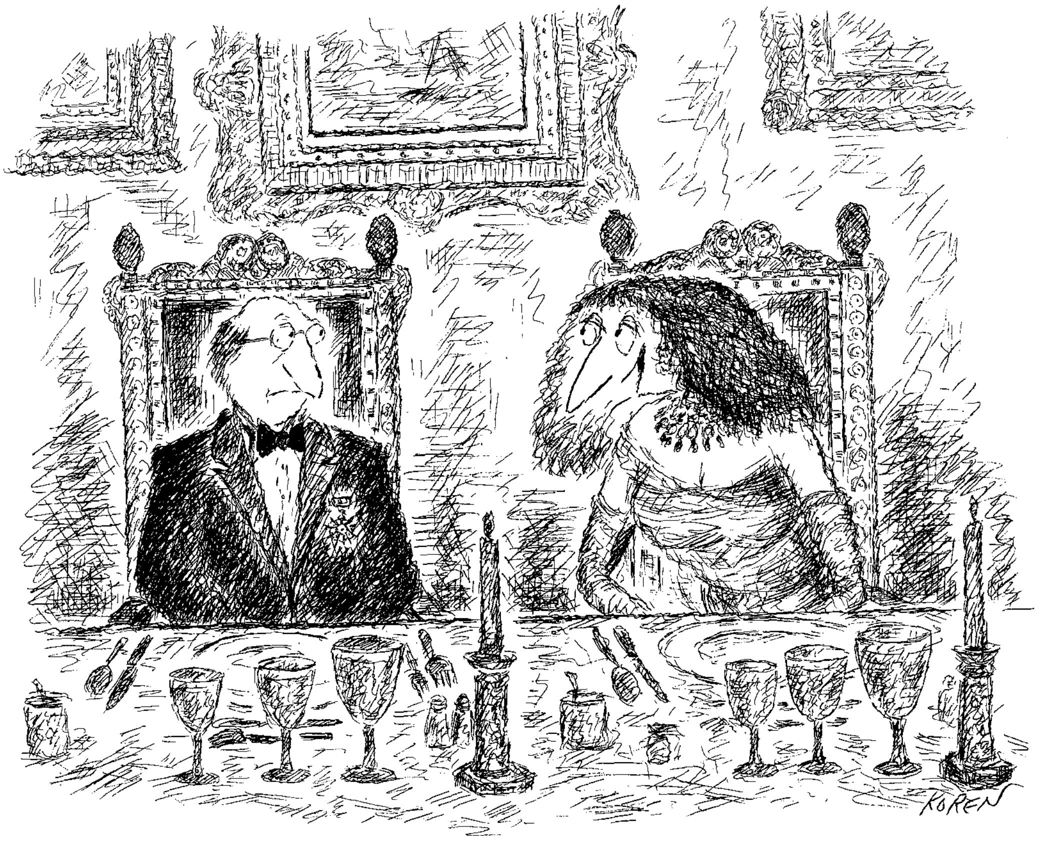
CUB disseminates literature about the "pathology" of adoption and adopted children. In most states, adoption records are closed unless both a birth parent and an adult adoptee request information on the other's whereabouts. CUB encourages birth parents and adoptees to bypass such laws, and to search out and persistently seek contact even if the opposite party initially rejects it.

CUB chapters hold two different kinds of meetings—public ones, to give "support," and private ones, to concentrate on "search." To be eligible to attend the search meetings, a member must have attended several public meetings, must be known to the leaders of the chapter, and must pay a membership fee. In addition to conducting searches by combing through old telephone directories and newspapers, birth records, driver's licenses, and genealogical libraries, CUB, according to some former members, advocates bribing adoption-agency clerks, stealing files, and misrepresenting or disguising oneself. It passes out books and pamphlets with titles like "Death by Adoption" and "I Would Have Searched Forever." To attract new recruits to the movement, it places national ads, such as "Adoption Loss? Write to . . ." Local chapters may go for more specific targets, such as "Grandparents: Were You Separated from Your Grandchild by Adoption?"

Over the years, however, CUB has drawn its power not from its ads and the relatively small numbers who attend its meetings but from television talk shows. On numerous occasions, CUB-sponsored birth mothers have appeared on television talk shows and been tearfully reunited with children given up for adoption twenty-five years earlier. Over the last two decades, the number of adoptions in this country has decreased; in 1986, the last year for which figures are available, there were fifty-one thousand adoptions, down from eighty-nine thousand in 1970. An increase in abortions accounts for part of that drop. CUB takes credit, too. "Enormous numbers of women were affected by these television shows and were discouraged from choosing adoption," says Janet Fenton, CUB's national president.

Critics of the group concede that it has had a powerful impact on perceptions of adoption, one that threatens to obscure the many positive experiences of birth mothers and adoptees alike. "CUB and other groups have succeeded in infiltrating the child-welfare system, creating an anti-adoption attitude," says Mary Beth Seader, who is the vice-president of the National Council for Adoption, an advocacy group based in Washington, D.C. "Many of the pregnant women that I counsel are terrified of choosing adoption, because they've seen or read some CUB propaganda. The members of the anti-adoption groups come from great pain, and their pain is real, but it has made them into predators. They have never worked through the normal process of grieving, which moves from anger to acceptance of loss. Their message is that they have suffered the one unrecoverable loss of a lifetime and that the only treatment is to undo all adoptions. The troubling thing is how they pose as support groups, when they are really just the opposite. Their purpose is to fasten onto women who are in the same vulnerable and formative stages they were once in. They suck them into their passionate obsession, so that they, too, will get stuck in pathological grief that lasts a lifetime."

The members of CUB and related groups do not have one political affiliation. Some are staunch "pro-lifers" and "family preservationists," who believe that adoption is as godless as abortion. Some are "pro-choice" radical feminists who believe that closed adoption is society's way of punishing women for being sexually active. (A small number are themselves adoptive parents who favor unsealing all records.) Many members see adoption as a class issue. As infertility rates increase, particularly among career women, who may put off childbearing until too late, so does "the demand for poor women's babies by the infertile élite," as Carole Anderson puts it. "The powerful and the wealthy just buy what they want. Part of the sell is that they get to own the kids, pretending they don't come from other people, from other families."



"Have you ever checked out London?"

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In recent years, many couples seeking to adopt have bypassed state-run adoption agencies, with their strict standards and long waiting periods, for the much quicker route of private adoption, wherein a third party—often a lawyer—brings them together with a birth mother months before the baby is due. As a result, these pregnant women often routinely screen prospective adoptive parents from résumés, or even through interviews. This is a long way from such nightmarish ordeals, cited by older CUB members, as unwed mothers' being forcibly sent to homes with bars on the windows, or being blindfolded during delivery and having their babies whisked away before they could see them. At the same time, the new systems have introduced other concerns—for example, that preliminary contact between the birth mother and the adopting couple can produce in her a sense of inferiority or obligation, which in some cases may have the force of coercion.

Over the past two decades, birth parents have gained added protections from the courts. In most states, a birth mother now has anywhere from a few weeks to six months to change her mind after relinquishing a child. In most states pre-adoption counselling is mandatory. The courts have shown a bias toward biological parents. For instance, in many places a birth father who has not signed away his parental rights can show up long after the baby is born, claim that he did not know of its existence, and sue for custody. Despite these measures, CUB and similar groups claim that birth parents do not receive enough legal and pyschological counselling before they sign parental waivers. They say that, while women thinking of giving up their babies are no longer locked away, they are often manipulated by fast-talking attorneys representing adoptive parents.

National Council for Adoption statistics show that only between two and five per cent of birth mothers and adoptees search for each other. However, the anti-adoption groups maintain that adopted children suffer deep emotional scars and are condemned to be "amputees," missing a piece of themselves, which they look for all their lives. Although research data show that adoptees absorb many characteristics and mannerisms of their adoptive parents, these groups share a conviction that genetics is the most significant basis for identity.

Carole Anderson, CUB's vice-president, is now a lawyer in Davenport, Iowa, married, with two daughters, but in her twenties she was obsessed with hunting for a son whom she says she felt forced, by her parents and by society, to give away. "I started when he was just weeks old," she says. "I tried to get a job at the courthouse, thinking I could find his records. Then I got a degree in social work on the theory that I could get a job at the adoption agency where I placed him. They told me I needed an M.S.W., and so I went and got that, and still couldn't get inside. I hired private investigators and they turned up nothing. Finally, in 1978, the year I joined CUB, I found him, and I won't tell you how. I would drive a hundred miles on a Sunday morning to his little town just to catch a glimpse of him sitting in a pew. Sometimes I would only see him walking to the church from a car, and sometimes not at all. When I saw his parents, it made me sick inside."

When Anderson located her son, he

was eleven years old. A detective she then hired took pictures of him with a telephoto lens. She wanted to make contact with her son, but when she called his adoptive parents they were hostile to the idea. "I had to wait until he was eighteen, and when we met he looked more like me than my daughters do—thick blond hair, long, narrow face, the same chin. We were as rigid as boards—we both freeze up at emotional events. We sat down for lunch and ordered the same thing—barbecued beef, no coleslaw."

Not surprisingly, adoptive parents have been less than sympathetic to CUB's methods. In 1985, a group of adoptive parents, birth parents, and adoptees in Iowa, some of whom had been stalked and harassed by CUB members, formed the Pro-Adoption Coalition of Iowa. Beverly Howard, its founder, says, "CUB's terror tactics have ruined so many people's lives that adoptive families are scared silent. Everyone is afraid that if we speak out our children will be targeted."

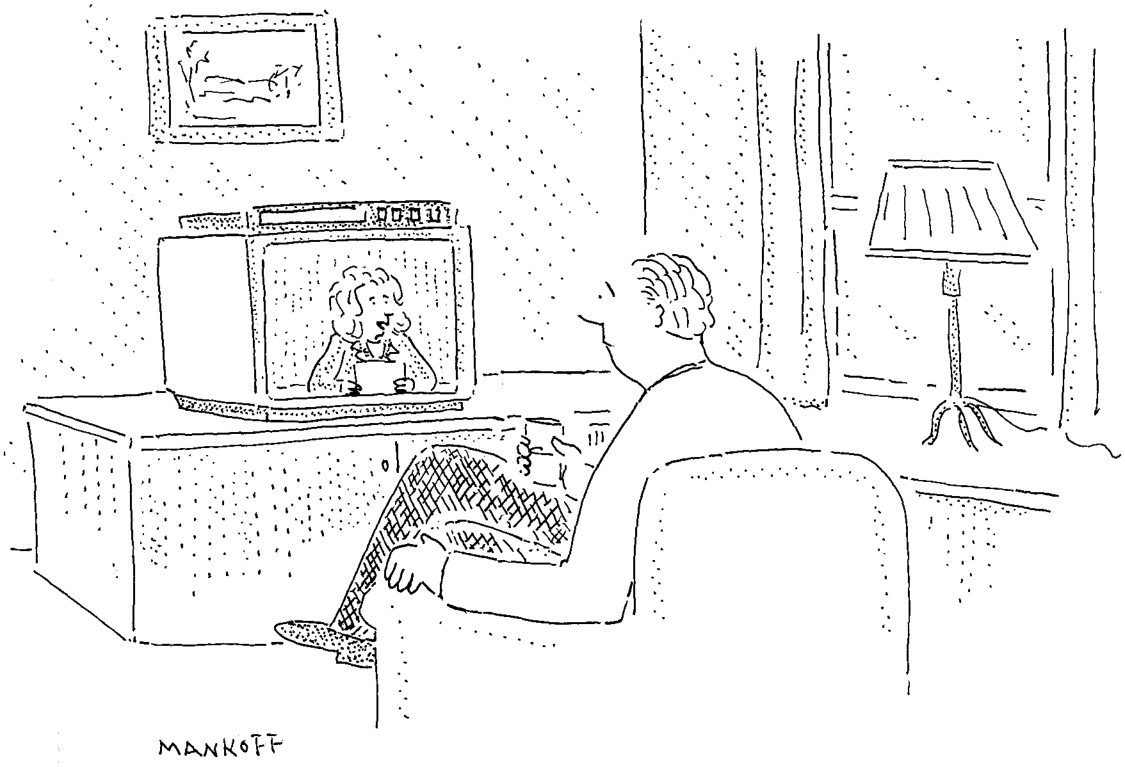
Several people affiliated with the coalition agreed, however, to tell their stories anonymously. One couple, who called themselves Stan and Jean, said that when their adopted daughter was seventeen she became the target of what they later learned was a standard CUB infiltration strategy. First, she began receiving greeting cards signed by children. (CUB calls these missives from half siblings "icebreakers.") Months later, other cards arrived, this time signed "Your sister" and "Your brother." Then the girl's friends reported that a woman and two children were hanging around the schoolyard asking questions about her. On her eighteenth birthday, she received a package full of expensive clothes and a card that read "From your birth mother, Rita."

"The next thing we heard," Jean said, "someone had called her school asking for information about her, and when the school questioned the caller she said, 'I'm her birth mother, isn't that good enough?' Then, finally, she came up to us in public, introduced herself, and said, 'Thank you for raising my daughter.' I thought Stan was going to have a heart attack. Our daughter is a very softhearted girl, and this woman has filled her with guilt and confusion. She told her terrible lies, such as that she had gone bankrupt because of how much the adoption fees had cost. She followed her to college and hung around her—she tried to turn our daughter against us, and we couldn't do a thing about it." Jean said that these events were more than her daughter could cope with. "She was brilliant, she had a wonderful future, and now she has dropped out of college, gained eighty pounds, and been hospitalized for bulimia," she said.

A twenty-five-year-old adoptee named Ronnie, who rejected repeated overtures from her birth mother when she was seventeen, says, "The insidious thing about groups like CUB is that they plant seeds in birth mothers and adoptees that they have been wronged. They get birth mothers to think they are looking for their abandoned children out of love, when it's really out of selfishness."

Judy Wilkins, the leader of the Cedar Rapids CUB meeting that Cara Clausen attended, says that new members often are not aware of their desire for contact: "They all say the same things—'All I want to know is if my baby is alive' or, if they are adoptees, 'I just want some medical information.' Then, when we tell them they can search and find without its costing their life savings, they are transformed. Slowly, they realize the underlying reason for the misery in their lives."

In Wilkins' wallet is a photograph of a son whom she placed for adoption twenty years ago. She had three other children after she was married, but this picture is the first one in the folder. Hers is not a happy-reunion story. She located her son and visited his home town, once attending a swim meet and standing so close that she could almost touch him as he came out of the water. But when she finally made contact he asked that she leave him alone. She attended his graduation anyway, and there a half sister he had never met slipped him a letter, but he sent it back unopened. "I think about him every day of my life," Wilkins says, her eyes filling with tears. "I feel he is here beside me,



"Doctors said that although the approach is still experimental, it may prove an effective weapon in the fight against health-care reform."

even though he doesn't know yet that somewhere he must feel the same way."

Laurie Parker, a member of the Cedar Rapids chapter of CUB who placed her son twenty years ago, has fared better and, because of her success, she often works with new recruits, like Cara Clausen. She, too, has placed a photograph of her "lost" son in her wallet; it covers the pictures of her other children, who are eighteen, sixteen, and fourteen, but she seems surprised when this is pointed out. Nine years ago, she located her firstborn, not far from where she lived. Unbeknownst to him or his adoptive family, she joined the PTA at his school and subscribed to the yearbooks. She and her younger children cheered him at his baseball games. Then, one day, she felt that the time had come. He was sixteen. She left a note on his pickup truck. "I wrote him that if he didn't want to know me, O.K., but please not to punish his brother and sisters. He stormed into my house the next day, and my children jumped all over him like puppy dogs, and that melted his anger. I suppose technically I had stalked him, but he didn't seem to mind."

Laurie, who is Catholic, admits that she was as dubious about his adoptive family, who are Mormons, as they were of her for intruding. "But we have reconciled our differences now," she says, sighing. "He is down in Argentina doing his Mormon mission work. I'm not very happy about it. I miss him. He is still loyal to them, but he appreciates finally being connected to someone who is really like him, who walks the way he does, who has the same hand gestures. It's amazing—things that normal families just take for granted."

BRUEGHEL'S TWO MONKEYS

This is what I see in my dream about final exams:
two monkeys, chained to the floor, sit on the windowsill,
the sky behind them flutters,
the sea is taking its bath.

The exam is History of Mankind.
I stammer and hedge.

One monkey stares and listens with mocking disdain,
the other seems to be dreaming away—
but when it's clear I don't know what to say
he prompts me with a gentle
clinking of his chain.

—Wislawa Szymborska

(Translated, from the Polish, by Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh.)

CARA CLAUSEN walked into the March 4th CUB meeting with trepidation. It was being held at St. Luke's Hospital, where she had left her baby behind three weeks earlier. She had a friend from work with her, and the two entered a large conference room and settled into chairs off to the side of a long table where about a dozen people were gathered.

An adoptee named Diane began to speak, in an uncertain voice. "I want to find my birth mother," she said. "I've never fitted in with my adopted family. I want to know who I am like. But I don't know if I can go through the ordeal of searching." The group encouraged her, told her that she would be assigned a buddy to help her, that the process would build her self-esteem. Then someone turned to Cara and asked why she was there.

"I don't think I belong here," she said. "I know where my baby is. I gave her up."

The members all began talking at once.

"But you can do something! You have to do something before it's too late," Diane said. "If you don't, how are you ever going to explain it to her? Look at me. Do you want your daughter to end up feeling the way I do?"

"It's too late for us, but it's not too late for you," someone else said. "Did the hospital social worker ever tell you what it will feel like never to hear her first footstep or see her first smile on her first Christmas?"

Cara remembered how, in the letter she had mailed that very day to the DeBoers, she had asked them to send a progress report now and then. But Wilkins was now telling her, "Once that adoption goes through, you don't have a single right to a single picture. They don't have to tell you another thing about your child. If you want this child back, you have to fight for her. Let's do it now!"

It seemed to Cara that her mother had always decided everything for her. She was the fourth of five children, all but one of them girls. When Cara was in high school, her parents were older than those of her friends; they were economically secure, quiet and staid. In the Clausen home, there was seldom a voice raised, seldom any conflict. When Cara was in eighth grade, she had scoliosis, for which she had to wear a brace that ran from the base of her spine to her neck. She couldn't go swimming, or even bend over. For a girl of fourteen, it was mortifying. She always got good grades, knew her routines in band contests, played the organ at weddings so well that brides often let her choose the music. When she made up her mind to do something, she wouldn't stop until it was done, and done right. But in all this she seems to have required the support of an authority outside herself, which she would then trust absolutely. She says she never used birth control because she had been X-rayed repeatedly in the eighth grade and later read in the *Reader's Digest* that X-rays would make you sterile.

Cara's sisters and brother had successfully left home. Two sisters got advanced degrees and became librarians. But after a year and a half of college at the University of Northern Iowa, Cara got stress headaches and dropped out. She later worked as a nanny in a Boston suburb and in Chicago, but eventually returned to Blairstown, because she was homesick. Then came the pregnancy, so impossible to face that she did not seek prenatal care. No one had ever broken the rules this badly in Earlene's house. Cara felt she had brought disgrace on the whole family—first for the pregnancy and now with the adoption.

By the end of the evening of March 4th, Cara Clausen had put herself in the hands of CUB. Judy Wilkins and Carole Anderson were excited; it was seldom that a birth mother walked into CUB before the adoption of her child had been finalized. By the next day, Anderson had got a friend from law school, Jacqueline Miller, to represent Cara.

On March 4th, the DeBoers had received Cara's farewell letters—one to them and one to Jessi. "I cried for hours," Robby wrote in her diary. "I felt like I had taken Jessi away from her." But she knew that these emotions were normal in newly adoptive parents, and she felt essentially reassured; it was clear from the letters that Cara wanted the adoption to go through. The next day, Robby began a letter thanking her for Jessi and detailing her hopes and dreams for the child.

On March 6th, Cara filed a motion with the Iowa District Court in Linn County. She asked for her parental rights to be restored, on the grounds that she had been coerced into signing them away by the DeBoers' attorney, John Monroe, and that the termination order was based on false information about the baby's father.

On March 8th, Robby and Jan dressed Jessi in bright-red overalls and took her to Robby's mother's house, nearby, to celebrate her one-month birthday. Jessica, passed around among four of Robby's eight brothers and sisters, gave her first laugh. "She seems so old to me," Robby wrote in her diary. "It was so important and I can't tell you why, but this was Jessi's day." When the DeBoers returned home that evening, there was a phone message from John Monroe. Robby called him back.

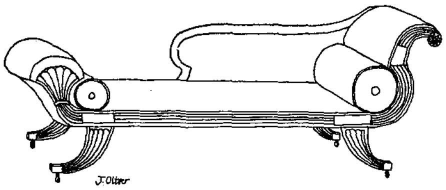
"Something's gone wrong," he said. "Cara wants Jessica back."

"What?" Robby sank into a chair. "But I just got her letter! It's all settled. This doesn't make sense!"

Several days later they looked in disbelief at Cara's motion, which was contradicted on all counts by Monroe's sworn affidavit. Cara claimed that she had received no counselling from the hospital, but Monroe, who was a judicially appointed hospitalization referee, stated that she had talked to a hospital social worker. Cara claimed that Monroe had come to her hospital room before the end of a statutory seventy-two-hour waiting period and told her she had to sign the release right then, but Monroe stated that she had waived her right to the full seventy-two hours and asked to sign earlier, although he had offered to come out to Blairstown the next day. Cara claimed to have been full of drugs and unaware of exactly what she was signing, including the fact that she had three weeks from that point in which to change her mind, but her doctor and nurses at the time had reported that she understood exactly what she was signing.

The letter Cara had sent the DeBoers for Jessica, written the day after her birth, said, "I think of the love that surrounds you now. And I think of the overwhelming joy you brought to your mom and dad. . . . You are blessed with people who can give you what I cannot." The letter also said that Jessica had "the long skinny toes" of her birth father, a man who loved the water like a fish. What the DeBoers had found out about Scott Seefeldt was that he was long-boned and had moved to the East Coast. Now they heard about Dan Schmidt, who was described as big and squarely built and who lived in Iowa corn country.

"Robby, this is a huge puzzle," Jan said. "Who is the real father here?" He was a perfectionist, known for his straight edges, his meticulous attention to calibration. True, when he was in his twenties he had rebelled against a strict Dutch Reform upbringing—drinking, raising hell, and getting into trouble with the law—but he had worked for the last twenty-three years in the trade of his father, and he was known as one of the most careful and versatile pressmen at the University of Michigan. He had fallen in love with Robby, whom he met in 1980, and he pursued her relentlessly. He insisted on asking her parents for her hand in marriage. Perhaps that elegant, old-fashioned act was what finally won her. Never had he encountered such catastrophe as when he married Robby, though, for on their honeymoon she nearly died in his arms of viral meningitis, which subsequently recurred three times.

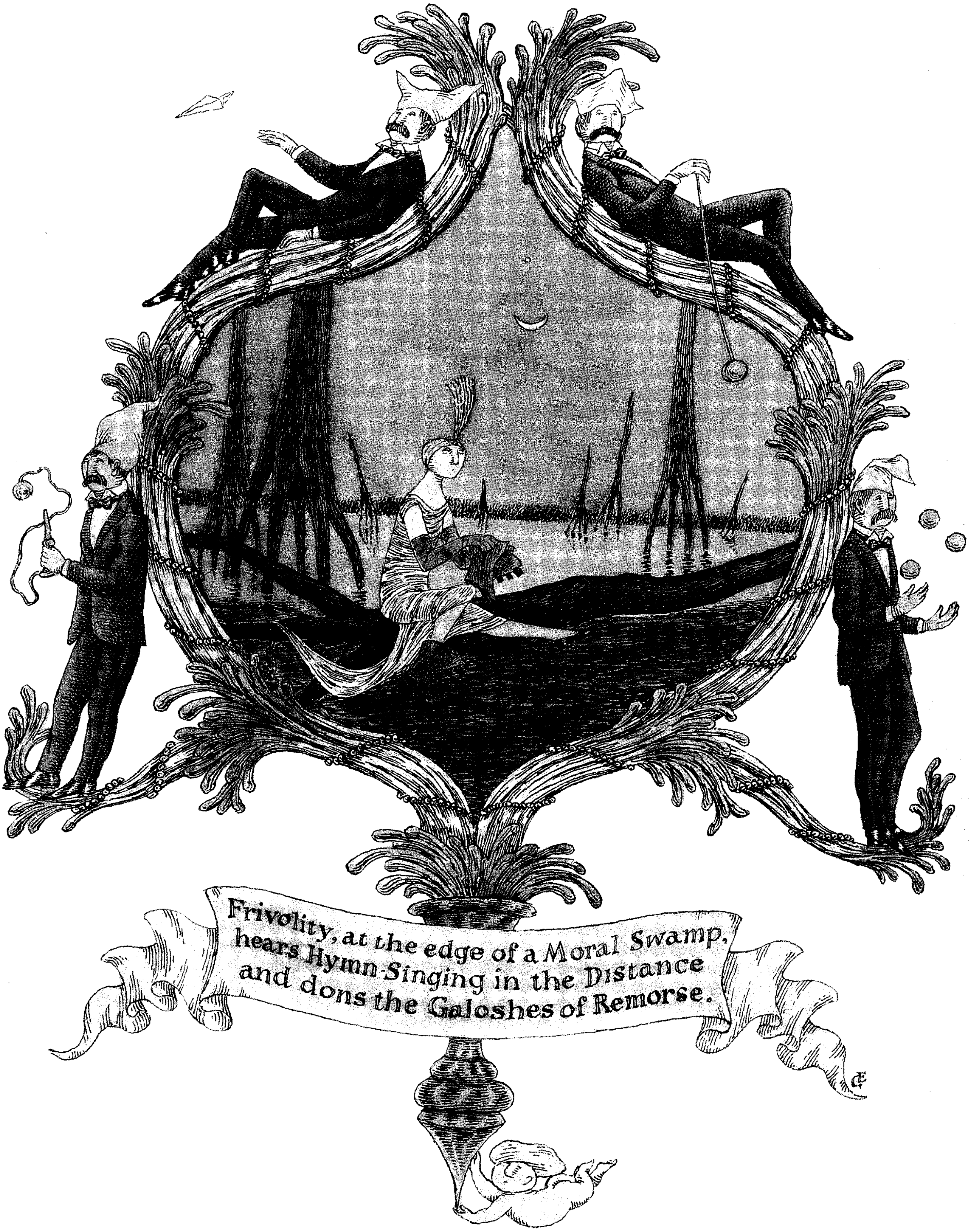


He looked over at her now, but she seemed more bewildered than frightened. "I can't believe Cara really wants her back," she said as she pored over the legal papers. "Do you think she's being manipulated by her mother? Are the letters her way of reaching out to tell us this?"

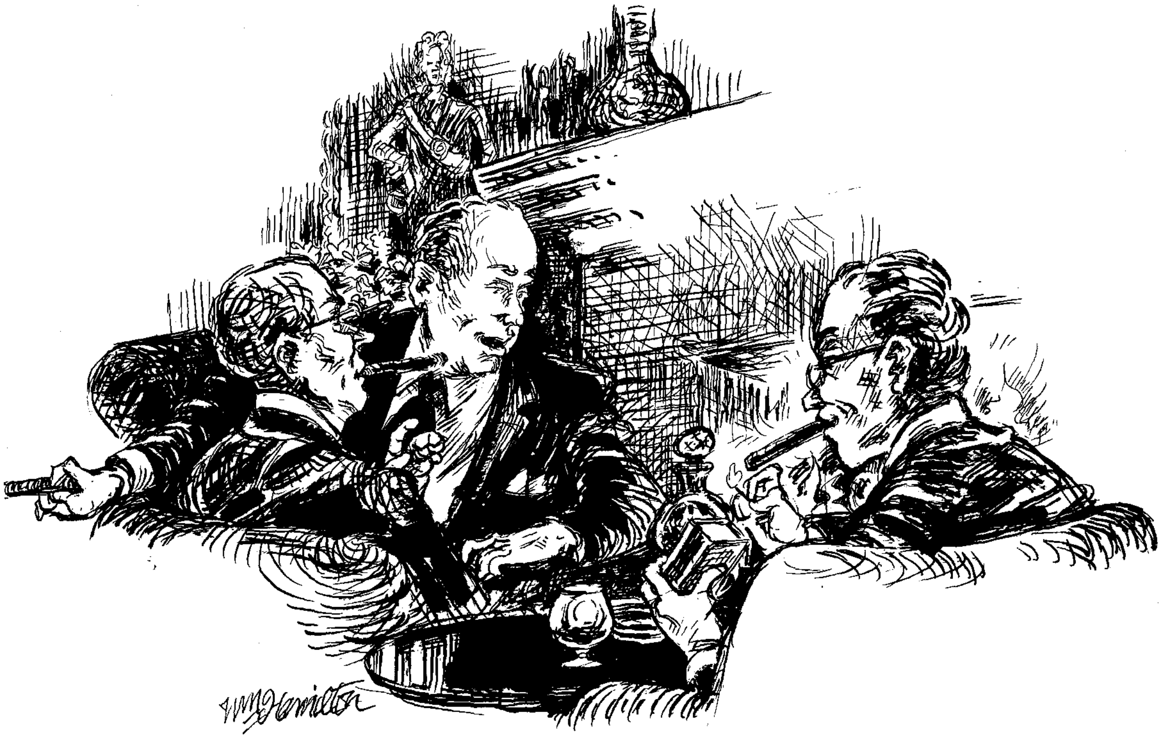
In Cedar Rapids, Cara and her sister went on a shopping spree. They bought "onesies" suits. Cara's milk had stopped coming, so they stocked up on baby formula. Shorty got out an old crib and the toys his children had played with. The baby, whom they now called Anna, after a family member, would soon be back where she belonged.

Laurie Parker, who had befriended Cara, called her regularly and drove out to Blairstown on the weekends. Long ago, Laurie had promised herself that someday someone like herself would come along and that she could be, as she puts it, "that one little voice that tells someone, 'You don't have to do what I did.'" In Cara, Laurie had found personal redemption. She told Cara how Anna was feeling: "Deep inside, there's a hole. Something is gone from her, but the bond will always be there." Laurie speculated about the turmoil and the subconscious anger that the DeBoers would feel when Anna began to show the characteristics of her birth parents. "What will she do when she's asked to make a family tree in school?" Laurie asked. Cara thought of her daughter's never knowing about the family's greatest honor—that Shorty Clausen was a decorated war hero, who had been shot down and held prisoner by the Nazis for fourteen months.

Dan Schmidt was excited when Cara told him she was trying to get their daughter back. He had always been crazy about Cara, but he had never had the nerve to tell her, particularly with Scott Seefeldt hovering around. When Dan began dating her, in January of 1990, Scott was also pursuing her. Dan



Frivolity, at the edge of a Moral Swamp, hears Hymn-Singing in the Distance and dons the Galoshes of Remorse.



"God, they were fun then—women."

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sent Cara a dozen long-stemmed roses for her birthday, and then Scott sent his own bouquet. Scott seemed always to be there, ready to comfort Cara, when she and Dan had their spats. Late one night in May, Dan had punched Scott right through his truck window, breaking the glass. A few days later, Dan, who had borrowed Cara's Cavalier, fell asleep at the wheel and totalled it. Scott Seefeldt was moving in on Cara, and Cara wasn't putting up any objections. Both Dan and Cara were very proud and very insecure. In June, Dan bowed out. Now, a year later, Cara was his again.

On March 7th, Scott Seefeldt flew into town for Cara's birthday. He sat at a bar with his arm around Cara; Dan watched from a distance and then went home. He knew that soon Cara would tell Scott, "You're not the baby's dad, Dan is. And if you could count, you'd know." Later that night, Cara went to meet Dan at a bar called Spike's. "Scott went into a tizzy," she said. "He's upset that the baby wasn't his, but he didn't give a damn when it was. I told him I couldn't stand the sight of him."

On March 12th, Jackie Miller, Cara's lawyer, filed a motion on Dan's behalf, declaring him to be the blood father of Baby Girl Clausen and asking the court to vacate the parental-termination orders, so that she could be returned to her natural parents. Dan went to a couple of CUB meetings with Cara; he had experienced many losses in his life and, he says, he was drawn to the righteous indignation of these women, who told him, "Your rights have been violated, Dan." As for the soul-baring part of CUB, he expressed his most powerful emotions somewhat differently. "How do you feel about your daughter being taken away from you, Dan?" CUB members asked him.

"How the hell do you think I feel?" he replied.

On March 14th, Robby, with her baby nestled against her in a Snugli, went to the library and studied adoption law. A hearing on Cara's motion had been set for the following week, in Cedar Rapids, and Robby wanted to prepare herself for the worst.

On March 19th, the DeBoers left Jessi with Robby's mother and headed for Iowa. It was the first time they had been without her. Robby cried in the car; when they arrived at her friends' house in Cedar Rapids and she saw the empty crib where Jessi had first slept she cried again. "I miss her so much," Robby wrote in her diary. "I smelled Jessi on Jan's sweatshirt all night."

Several miles away, Cara and Dan assumed that they would be getting Anna back the next day. "I get to hold her first, because you already have," Dan said.

"You get to change her diaper first because I already have," Cara said.

On March 21st, the DeBoers entered the courthouse in Cedar Rapids. John Monroe, whom Cara had accused of duping her, would now become a witness in the case. Another lawyer, Gary Robinson, took over for Monroe. He told the DeBoers to wait upstairs while he went into the custody hearing, in juvenile court. Robby and Jan spotted a young woman walking into the courthouse with an elderly couple, and realized it must be Cara with her parents. Then they saw Dan, wearing cowboy boots and a tight sweater. He towered over Cara, who happened to be wearing a jumper just like Robby's. The next thing the DeBoers knew, Jackie Miller was coming down the hall, speaking angrily. The juvenile-court judge had thrown out the case, for lack of jurisdiction.

"I'm just devastated," Earlene Clausen told Cara on their way back to Blairstown. She and Cara were thrust into an unfamiliar intimacy, united in pain. That night, Cara slept with her mother. It was too hard to stay in her own room when the crib she had set up was empty. She slept in her mother's bed the next night, too, and the night after that. She spread the baby blanket she had bought for Anna on her pillow. "I couldn't imagine living without my family," Cara told her mother. "I'm glad you were never stupid enough to do what I did."

Back in Ann Arbor, the DeBoers learned that Cara had appealed the juvenile court's decision and that Dan Schmidt had asked for a blood test to establish his paternity. The Iowa

Department of Human Services and Michigan adoption officials told them that if they relinquished Jessica she might be placed in temporary foster care until Cara's rights were restored. "Robby, we can't just let her go to some stranger or get lost in some welfare system for maybe weeks or months," Jan said. "And then what if Cara changes her mind again?" They decided to put off any decision.

Through the month of April, they received a flurry of court papers from Dan and Cara. Then, on April 29th, the Iowa District Court granted Dan Schmidt's motion: blood was to be drawn from Baby Girl Clausen. At the DeBoers' request, the court-ordered laboratory, Genetic Design, in North Carolina, supplied an affidavit saying that "very small babies can be difficult candidates from which to draw blood, due to their very tiny veins." The DeBoers petitioned the court to delay the testing until Jessica's veins matured, but the motion was denied.

Jan took a second job, to raise money for legal fees. Jessi developed an umbilical hernia, and Jan remarked wryly that it was as though Cara were reaching back, trying to reattach her, and Jessi wanted no part of it. "Jessi, I feel like all of this is my mess," Robby wrote. "If I didn't love you so much I could have given you back on your first month birthday. . . . I want to turn it around but I can't figure out how."

In Blairstown, Cara spent a lot of time looking in the mirror. "How could you have given up your baby?" she would ask herself. She felt that until she had righted her wrong she deserved to be punished. CUB's message of redemption through reunion gave her relief. "I forgive you," Laurie Parker would tell her. "And as long as you fight to get your baby back, you will be able to forgive yourself."

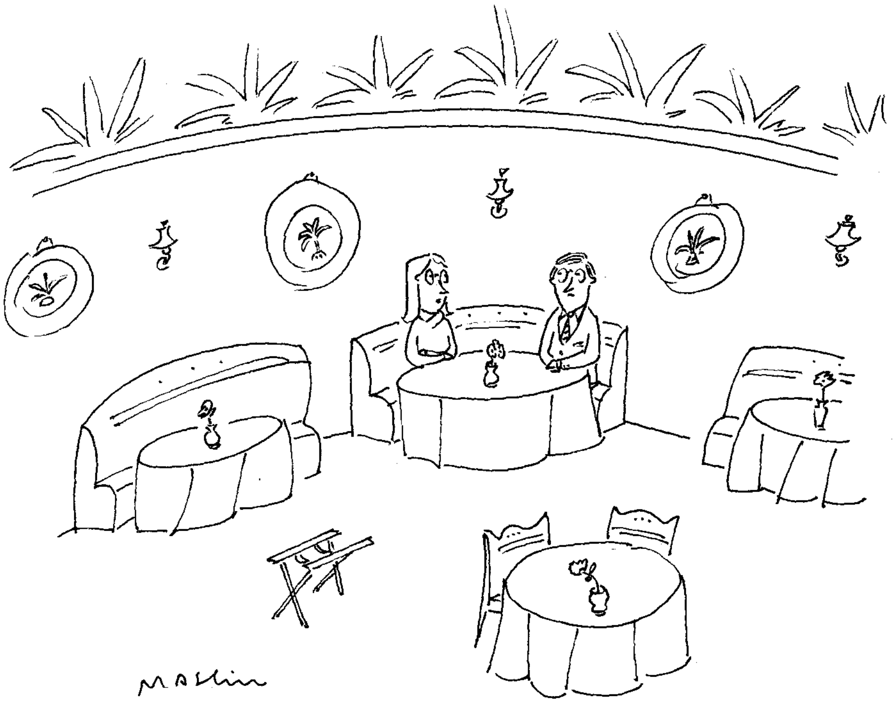
On July 8th, at the age of five months, Jessi was secured to a doctor's table. The doctor put a splint on her arm, from which long tubes ran, and then he inserted a needle. Afterward, he took a picture of Jessi, and her fingerprints, too, as required by law. The blood would be sent to Genetic Design, and in two weeks they would know if Jessi's DNA profile matched Dan Schmidt's.

Robby worried that if the blood-test results were positive Dan and Cara would just come and take Jessi. Needing cash, the DeBoers had sold some furniture, and in the days of waiting the house seemed unbearably sparse. Robby put photographs of Jessi in green brocade frames and hung them everywhere. She also framed her favorite little yellow-and-white suit and hat that Jessi had worn.

On July 22nd, at 10:30 A.M., Gary Robinson called from Cedar Rapids. "I have bad news, Robby," he said. "Dan Schmidt is the natural father." Robby said nothing. She hung up. Jan was at work—she and Jessi were alone. She sat down, crying, and wrote Jessi a goodbye letter.

Dan Schmidt also cried. He was on a Tennessee freeway when he learned the news. He was so excited that he didn't calm down until he got back and could see Cara. He had thought he would never get another chance at a good life, a life that included a normal, loving family. When he was eleven, his uncle took him one day to a state fair, and as they were leaving he informed Dan that his family did not have room for him anymore and that Dan was coming to live with him. Two decades later, Dan had a short, unhappy marriage that produced a son, Travis. When Travis was two, Dan took him to a similar fair, and when he returned him to his ex-wife's home, he says, she told him never to visit the boy again. He didn't see Travis for the next nine years, and before he knew it, he says, his ex-wife's new husband had legally adopted him. Dan spent his thirties as an embittered loner; when he wasn't on the road, he would be mindlessly partying. He always found himself alone on Christmas. Now Cara had changed all that. "Behind the fierce looks and the hot temper," she would tell Dan, "I know who you really are—just a big old Teddy bear." They had the same dry, sarcastic sense of humor, the same stubborn pride. And the struggle for Anna had brought them closer.

Robby began seeing Dan Schmidt in her dreams. Gary Robinson had found out that the biological father of her child not only had legally abandoned Travis, now fourteen years old, but had fathered a daughter, Amanda, now twelve, whom he had refused even to meet. Moreover, he had failed to pay child support for both children, and the court had garnisheed his wages. Cara had no parental rights, and the DeBoers had decided that, even if they had to sell everything that belonged to them, they would not willingly relinquish Jessi to this man. Thanks to Robby's long hours at the law library



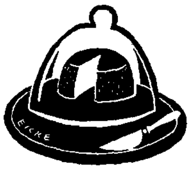
"Should we attempt to gain some ground this evening, Ron—or remain dug in?"

and her many consultations with lawyers, the DeBoers had worked out a creative legal strategy. They would petition the court to terminate Daniel Schmidt's paternal rights, on the ground that he had proved to be an unfit parent. They would try to get a jury trial and a hearing based on the best interests of the child.

Robby, however, felt no pleasure in the mounting discoveries about Dan. Her fear deepened by the day. "I want to call Cara on the phone and tell her to use her head," she wrote. "Does she realize what could happen to Jessi if Dan got her for good? Or does she only think wishful thoughts?"

For the next three months, the DeBoers scrambled to get witnesses for the hearings in Iowa. They quashed an attempt by the opposition to bring Jessi into the courtroom, to prove that she looked like Dan. They won a motion for a jury, and then a second judge decided there would be no jury. When they went strolling on Saturdays at the Ann Arbor farmers' market, trying to forget it all, people seemed to smile at them. "They're probably thinking we're the perfect American family," Jan said.

During this time, Jessi's personality blossomed. She would imitate Robby, shaking her head and then bursting into laughter; she would blow big noisy kisses; she would hug neighborhood children. Sometimes, during particularly tense periods of pretrial motions, Robby would treat Jessi and herself to ice cream for breakfast. Jessi had trouble sleeping. So did Robby. "I've had nightmares of the judge saying you've got to go back," she wrote in her diary. "And I am screaming, and the screaming never goes away. I hear it all night long. Jessi, to lose you would be to lose myself."



In Cedar Rapids, on November 1st, Dan presented Cara with a diamond ring. That summer, he had said to Cara, "If I asked you to marry me, would you?"

"In a heartbeat," she had said.

On November 4th, in Linn County District Court, Roberta DeBoer and Cara Clausen found themselves face to face for the first time. They stared into each other's eyes. The court had ruled that it would first address the question of Dan's paternity and then, if it were established, whether to terminate it. Excluding from consideration the expert testimony that Robby had gathered to try to put Jessi's welfare at the center of the trial, the court had determined that the rights of a biological parent took precedence over those of a child.

For the DeBoers to win, the court would have to find that Dan had abandoned the baby—a difficult standard of proof, given that it was now clear he hadn't known that he was the father. Still, the DeBoers thought they could influence the judge by documenting Dan's pattern of abandonment. They had powerful witnesses in two women who would speak against him: his ex-wife and the mother of Amanda.

Cara Clausen testified that she and Dan were to be married in April and that they wanted to make a home for their baby.

The Iowa court did not, as had been expected, make its findings before the holidays. Robby was in a state of high anxiety. "Calm down," Jan said. "We have to be grateful that we can keep her through Christmas." They trimmed a tree and wrapped an abundance of presents for what would be their first, and possibly last, Christmas with Jessica.

On December 27th, Judge Paul J. Kilburg, of the Iowa District Court, ruled that, although the DeBoers had provided "exemplary care" for the baby, they had not proved that Schmidt had abandoned her. If established legal principles did not favor the rights of biological parents in such cases, even above those who could provide better homes, he said, then "the court would be engaged in uncontrolled social engineering." The court ordered the DeBoers' adoption petition denied and instructed them to return custody of Jessica to Daniel Schmidt. The court also ordered child-welfare officers to investigate whether Dan Schmidt was in fact a fit parent.

In Blairstown, Dan and Travis were painting the walls of a bungalow that Dan and Cara had just rented when Earlene Clausen walked in. "You better sit down, Dan—you've got your daughter back," she said.

Travis let out a shout. His adoptive father had left the family some time ago, and now he had his own father back. "I'll babysit for her, Dad. I'll come over all the time," he said. Dan, still holding his paintbrush, called Cara at work. "We won!" he told her. "She'll be home by 6 P.M. on January 12th. I love you."

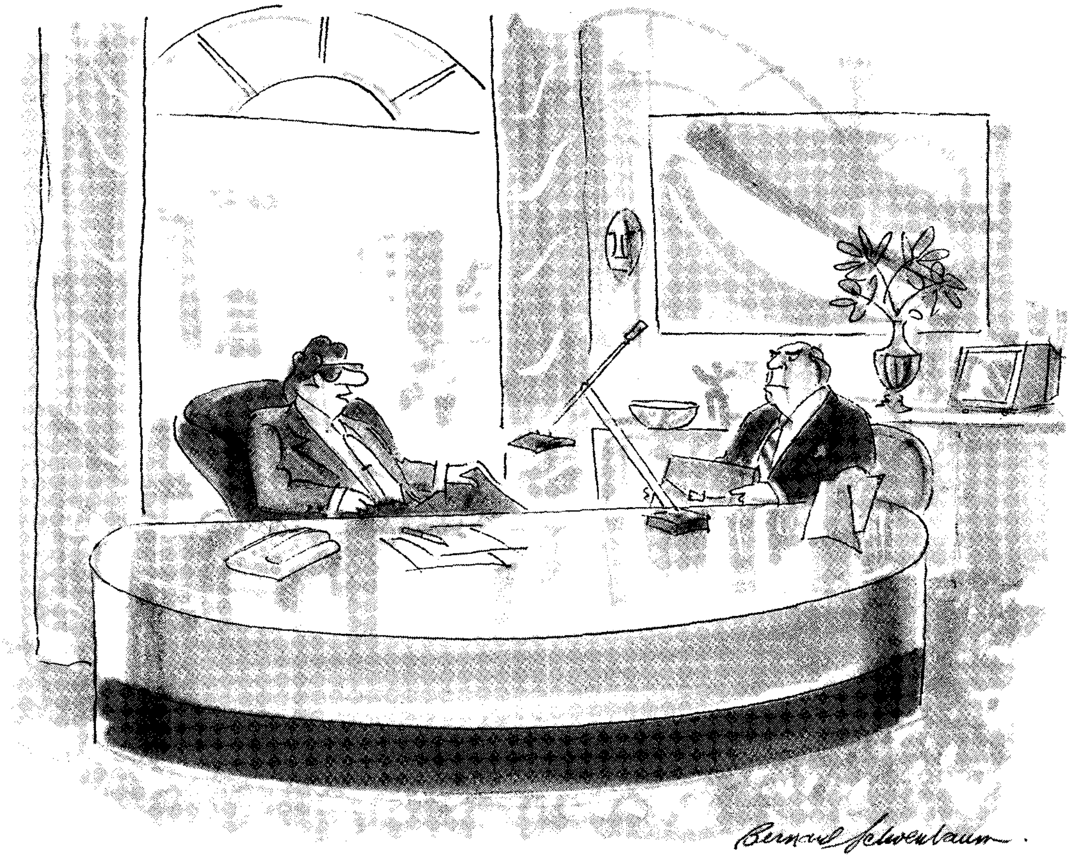
"There's no way I'm giving Jessi to that man!" Robby screamed when she heard the news. "No way in hell!"

The DeBoers didn't believe that Cara really planned to marry Dan. On January 2nd, Robby called Gary Robinson. "I want you to go into the judge's chambers and ask him to restore Cara's parental rights," she instructed him. "I want Jessi to go to Cara, not to Dan Schmidt." Robinson told her that would be legally impossible; the judge was hearing only the father's case.

The anguish that Robby and Jan felt during the first days of 1992, as various friends and family members came to say goodbye to Jessi, was so deep that it came between them. Jan would go out back for a cigarette, and sometimes he would go into the garage and hurl two-by-fours at the wall. Sometimes he would stay out there and cry. Robby turned to her diary: "I just want to crawl into myself and never come out. My daughter who is not really my daughter is slipping through my fingers with no way to really grasp her and have her be mine. I feel so small. I can't take it anymore. Jessi is the only one I could never part with."

Finally, Robby woke up one morning, called Robinson, and told him to appeal Kilburg's order to the Iowa Supreme Court. In the meantime, if the courts would not listen to the best interests of the child, maybe someone else would. She stopped writing in her diary and instead poured her emotions into letters to child-welfare advocates all over the country, including Hillary Rodham Clinton, of Little Rock, Arkansas. Court proceedings involving a juvenile are sealed in Iowa, and it is a crime to disclose them, so the people there were ignorant of Jessica's plight. But as a Michigan resident Robby could fix that. To the fury of Cara, Dan, and Jackie Miller, Robby told her side of the story to the Iowa press.

Cara and Dan turned on the television on January 9th and saw their eleven-month-old daughter cuddled between the DeBoers. It was their first real glimpse of her. "Now the whole world can see my daughter, but I can't," Dan complained. He was sure, however, that Anna would be with her "real" parents for her first birthday; CUB had practically guaranteed it. Both Cara's family and Dan's had bought birthday gifts. They had got winter clothes in two sizes, because they didn't really know how big Anna was.



"Of course, you realize that respectability for a sleazebag like yourself doesn't come cheap."

On February 7th, the day before the child's first birthday, the Iowa Supreme Court ruled that it would hear the DeBoers' appeal; until then, she would remain in Michigan. Cara fell apart. By the time her baby came home, she would no longer be a baby. Laurie Parker called her as soon as she heard. "Scream at me," she said. "Get it out, get all the garbage out."

Cara raged against the judges. "Why are they delaying this? Don't they know that she's still little and if she comes home now it won't hurt her?"

Earlene Clausen said, "Thank God that we have the wedding to occupy our minds." On April 11th, Cara Clausen, wearing a pink satin bridesmaid's dress that she had worn at a friend's wedding, stood at the altar of Grace Lutheran Church and became Mrs. Daniel Schmidt. Travis ushered in the guests. Earlene, who had planned to hold her small granddaughter in the front pew, sat with empty arms. But she was grateful. Most of Cara's friends had married long ago; six times a bridesmaid, her daughter was at last a bride. If some people whispered that Cara had married beneath her, Earlene didn't care. She liked Dan, and he had stuck by Cara and the baby. "We are grateful for your presence here," the wedding program read. "May God Bless all of you and Bless our daughter Anna who is with us, as always, in our hearts, thoughts, and prayers."

The couple had invited more than three hundred people to the reception, in the nearby American Legion Hall, but only a hundred and twenty-five showed up. The custody battle had flooded the media all winter, and Blairstown had thrived on the attendant gossip, much of it malicious. Everybody loved Shorty Clausen, but not everyone loved Dan Schmidt. The Schmidts began to receive hate mail accusing Cara of marrying for convenience and Dan of marrying for the publicity—and the money that rights to their story might bring. Someone sent him a magazine article smeared with feces. Cara comforted Dan and kept her own spirits up by going to CUB meetings, where other birth mothers viewed her as an inspiration. Diane, the adoptee whom Cara had met at her first CUB meeting, had found her birth mother, in Blairstown, and it turned out that she was a blood relative of the Clausens. Cara felt that CUB had formed a circle around her and given her new self-esteem, a sense of belonging, and a higher purpose.

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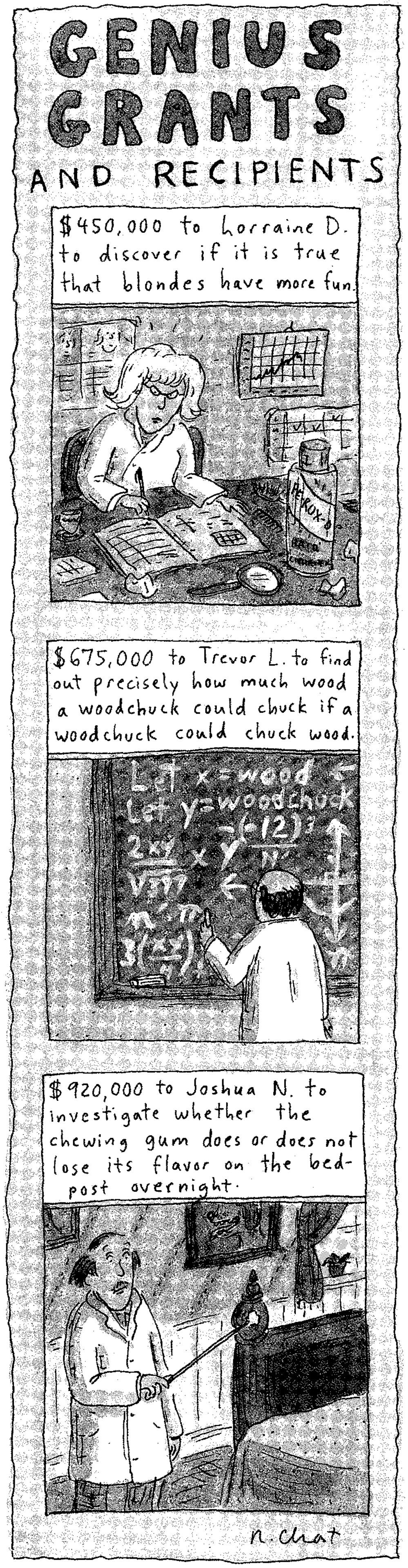
ON April 15th, Jessica said "Mama" for the first time. Robby hugged her. "In a single moment, Jessi, you can wipe out so much hardship," she said. Two weeks earlier, she had received a twelve-thousand-dollar legal bill, which she couldn't pay, and two acquaintances, seeing her tears, had written out checks unasked.

The summer dragged on. Appeals in Iowa usually take a year, and the DeBoers found the waiting almost unbearable. Jessi became more and more attached to Robby's mother, sister, and two brothers, who saw her daily. Then, in September, Jan's parents came from Florida for a long visit. After they left, Jessi went upstairs and down, calling for her grandfather: "Opa, where you?"

Two days after they left, the DeBoers were preparing to go on vacation when the phone rang. It was Kimberly Ten Eick, a lawyer who worked with Gary


GENIUS GRANTS AND RECIPIENTS
$450,000 to Lorraine D. to discover if it is true that blondes have more fun.
PEROX-D
$675,000 to Trevor L. to find out precisely how much wood a woodchuck could chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood.
Let x=wood
Let y=woodchuck
$920,000 to Joshua N. to investigate whether the chewing gum does or does not lose its flavor on the bed-post overnight.
R. Chast

Robinson. "The Iowa Supreme Court was against you, eight to one," Ten Eick said. "Nobody seems to know what can happen now. You'd better lie low, because the press could be all over you."

"Please get a stay, Kim. Please, please," Robby said. Then she told Jan, "Let's just leave right now." Jan backed his van around to the back window, so that they wouldn't be seen. Robby passed out to him clothes, bottles, diapers, and all their court documents. They drove north, toward Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and checked into a Days Inn under an alias. For the next three days, Jan kept watch while Robby, with Jessi always at her side, worked the phone, trying to assess their situation. "Do we still have legal custody of Jessi? Are we kidnapping her?" she asked a lawyer friend in Washington. The lawyer assured her that they had a grace period in which to appeal to the United States Supreme Court.

In one week Ann Arbor supporters of the DeBoers collected four thousand signatures and petitioned the United States Supreme Court; however, the Court declined to hear the case. Then, on Friday, November 20th, the Supreme Court of Iowa denied a motion for a rehearing. It again affirmed the District Court's decision, remarking that, although Daniel Schmidt had a poor record as a parent and although it was "alluring" to consider the best interests of Baby Girl Clausen, Iowa law dictated that his rights superseded hers.

That same day, Jackie Miller, the Schmidts' lawyer, tried to get Judge Kilburg, of the District Court, to issue an immediate transfer order, but was unsuccessful. Kilburg instead set a date of December 3rd for a transfer hearing, to be attended by the Schmidts, the DeBoers, and the child. But Dan wanted his daughter home for Thanksgiving. "I had had it up to here," he says. "You put your faith in the law and they say you'll get her in January and you don't, you'll get her next year and you don't, and on and on. Jackie told me we should just go and try to get her. She said, 'Get certified copies of the District Court and the Supreme Court orders and just go.' Monday, I got the copies and I filled up some thermoses and picked up Cara after work. We drove all night and got to Ann Arbor the next morning. The car trunk was full of Huggies and a car seat—always has been, so we could get her at a moment's notice."

Dan and Cara walked into the Washtenaw County Courthouse in Ann Arbor at eight in the morning, and for the next seven hours, tired, hungry, and dazed, they went from one law-enforcement office to the next, looking for someone who would help them. "The clerk of the court said we had the wrong heading on the papers, and then another clerk said we needed to get another certified copy before we filed it, and then the clerk of the court sent us to the judge, and the judge sent us back to the clerk of the court," Schmidt says. "Then the clerk sent us up to the sheriff's office and the sheriff sent us to the police station, and the police said they would not go with us to the DeBoers' to help us get our daughter. Now I'm getting upset and Cara's trying to calm me down. She's afraid I'll lose my temper and get thrown in jail. Then we go to the City Attorney's office, and she's nice, but you can feel it in her voice—she hates us, and she says there's nothing she can do, the city could get sued, and if we go to the DeBoer house we'll be arrested for kidnapping. So we call Jackie, and she says, 'Forget it, come home.' I am really pissed off now, and suddenly here comes this Ann Arbor reporter who's been stalking us, and I'm crying, and I've got the reporter against the wall and she's trembling. Cara's yelling 'Be quiet, Dan!' and I'm shouting 'It's time they know the truth about all this!' "

Finally, Dan and Cara got back in their car and left. The reporter called the DeBoers to alert them that the Schmidts had said they had hired a private investigator to follow them. The evening before, Robby had seen a man tailing her in the supermarket; he watched her pick up Jessi on her third (and, consequently, her last) day with a play group. Robby begged Suellyn Scarnecchia, of the University of Michigan Child Advocacy Law Clinic, to help. She did, filing a plea that accused the Schmidts of having come onto Michigan soil to try to remove Jessica forcibly from the DeBoer home without a proper order; the plea asked that the Michigan courts intercede to protect Jessica. Scarnecchia cited the federal Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction Act

(U.C.C.J.A.), which allows one state to alter the custody order of another, provided that the child has resided in the state for at least six months.

The DeBoers failed to appear at the transfer hearing on December 3rd. The Iowa District Court cited them in contempt and ordered them to hand over the child to Dan Schmidt immediately. The same day, Judge William F. Ager, Jr., of the Circuit Court for Washtenaw County, Michigan, issued a temporary order restraining the Schmidts from removing Jessica. The two states were now joined in battle.

Judge Ager ordered the two sets of parents to appear at a hearing on January 5, 1993, to determine whether Michigan had jurisdiction to enter the dispute. Jackie Miller told Dan and Cara not to worry; Michigan was constitutionally bound to give "full faith and credit" to the ruling of another state, she assured them. This time, everyone was so confident Anna was coming home that Laurie Parker bought her some little bedtime-story books and a stuffed Barney dinosaur, so she would feel at home—the television had shown Jessi playing with a similar toy. She also bought the Schmidts an answering machine; they were fast becoming celebrities.

ON January 5th, Dan and Cara once again arrived in Ann Arbor. This time, they brought with them a new multicolored snowsuit for Anna. They did a double take when, turning on the local television news, they saw their daughter coming out of the DeBoers' house wearing what looked to be an identical snowsuit.

After hearing arguments from both sides, Judge Ager ruled that Jessica DeBoer was a resident of Michigan, and that, since the Iowa courts had been unable to consider her best interests, he would. Robby DeBoer put her head on Jan's shoulder and wept; at last, she felt, the one person who had been ignored in all this was going to have her day in court.

Cara Schmidt sat in disbelief. She began to hyperventilate. A bailiff led her and Dan into a private room at the back of the court. "How can he do this? How can he do this?" she said, sobbing. "She's *my* baby!"

"That judge doesn't know anything about us!" Dan yelled to no one in particular. He held Cara tight. "He could have ended this. Now it's getting dragged out even more."

The Schmidts had hired Marian Faupel, a somewhat theatrical lawyer who sympathizes with CUB's anti-adoption cause, to represent them in Michigan. She led her clients out of the courthouse and declared to the press that "a blood battle" had begun. She warned that "best-interest hearings often mean pulling down the pants of all the parties."

CUB, meanwhile, had begun seeking publicity for its views on the custody battle. In a letter to the New York *Times* published on January 14th, Carole Anderson claimed that the DeBoers had raised three hundred thousand dollars to "obtain a child who never needed them and will never be wholly theirs." (An examination of the DeBoers' financial records reveals that in fact they have raised, and spent, sixty-five thousand dollars. The Schmidts, who recently started a defense fund, say they have raised three thousand dollars in contributions from CUB and other supporters.)

Anderson has depicted the Schmidt-DeBoer case as a class struggle—the élite taking advantage of the poor. It is a compelling argument in the abstract, for the pattern of adoption in this country is one of adoptive parents who are wealthier than birth parents. The principals in this case, however, do not fit the stereotype. With an income of about thirty thousand dollars, the DeBoers actually make less than the Schmidts, who bring in thirty-five thousand dollars. Jan's father was a printer; Dan's was a trucker. Robby's father was an architect; Cara's father owned his own fuel-oil delivery business. The only real difference is in their cultural environments—a university town versus a farm community.

By mid-January, the acrimony between the Schmidts and the DeBoers had reached epic proportions. Each couple viewed the other as unfeeling, calculating, deceptive, and evil. Each thought the other did not love but only coveted the child. Each thought the other was tapping its phone. The Schmidts saw the DeBoers as baby-snatchers who had manipulated public opinion by plastering Anna's picture all over the press, and the DeBoers suspected that the Schmidts were planning ways to grab Jessica and spirit her back to Iowa.

IN the week before the hearings, Robby went around the house closing the blinds as Jessica cavorted with a retinue of stuffed bunnies. When she was sure that Robby was watching, she opened her bureau drawers and hurled all the socks and sweaters down the stairs. Then she waddled down to retrieve them and climbed back up, one step at a time, counting each step. "She could count all thirteen when she was only a year and a half," Robby said proudly. If Jessi, with her wide face and dark coloring, resembled her birth father more than anyone else, "she acts like me," Robby said. "She's a real doer, and she's very determined, and she has no fear."

Jan came home one day convinced that his wild youth might have cost them their daughter. Marian Faupel had unearthed police records showing that, as a young adult, he had been arrested in Ann Arbor for breaking and entering, and driving under the influence. It was all over the television news. "I've let everyone down, all the people who believed in me," he said.

Jessi saw her father and came running. This made him smile, and he galloped about the house with her. Then they went outside to build a playhouse out of crate wood.

Robby, watching Jan and Jessi from the window, said, "Even if we win in court, we'll never be able to legally adopt her, because of Dan's parental rights. And we can't risk taking her out of state, because Dan could claim her. If he takes her away, she's going to be traumatized. While we sit here and debate is she theirs, is she ours, I realize she's no one's. She's not a piece of property. She is an individual, who is learning to walk, talk, sing. I see this on a daily basis. She takes all this stress and wakes up smiling every day, and no one has represented her. At the end of the day, I want to say that I have been her guardian ad litem. I have to keep in my mind that *we* will recover from this, but *she* won't."

Jan came in to tape the television news, as he did whenever the DeBoer case was featured. "I want Jessi to know everything someday, in case I cannot tell her," he said. "The Schmidts accuse us of delaying the proceedings to help ourselves. But I want her to know the truth—that we only appealed for her own protection. I'm proud of us. I think I have been true to the stoical values of my forebears. God has tested me. My steel is so tempered I don't think it could be made stronger."

DEFIANCE

I go through periods, a grown man, still reluctant
to talk to my father. I let him call and leave messages
while I sit there like a fox in the woods waiting.
I don't answer, I don't say anything, I let the night
and the thick woods of my anger enclose me, I feel
the whole side of the country curled up around me,
the freshness of faraway streams, the naked rocks,
the jitter and hiss of smaller animals that are
earnestly going about their business, as my business
sinks to its essential breath and heartbeat until
I am so quiet you'd have to be connected to me by blood
to know I hadn't died there squatting with my eyes open,
and even then you couldn't be sure.

—Charlie Smith

In Blairstown, Dan and Cara Schmidt sat at their kitchen table with one of their lawyers, Pam Lewis. Until the case closed in Iowa, they had shunned interviews, and thus, Lewis said, they had been crucified in the press.

"Robby DeBoer thinks I won't be a good father because I have a dirt job," Dan Schmidt said, leaning back in his chair. "She wants me to abandon this child the way she accuses me of abandoning the other two. Well, I'll never give her up. And Robby DeBoer will never be able to get Anna a birth certificate—she'll never be able to name her."

"Dan, stop leaning back, you'll break the chair," Cara said, giving him a stern look. She is a meticulous housekeeper, and she was embarrassed by the furniture. "We put this home together in kind of a hurry, and I can't wait to throw out this ugly old stuff of Dan's," she said. She had made the house cozy, however, with plants and rag rugs, a mug that says "Motherhood Is Not for Wimps," and books with titles like "A Father's Words of Wisdom." When she gets home from work, the first thing she does is to dust the kitchen counters, because she supposes that the hot-air furnace has left some traces since she dusted eight hours earlier. "If I leave a tiny coffee ring, she's there with a sponge," Dan said teasingly. He stopped endangering the chair, but began rolling a napkin between his hands as Cara stared at it. "I've learned to live with her neatness, and she's learned to cook me steaks."

"Dripping with blood," Cara said, making a face. She used to work in a health-food store and is a partial vegetarian. They looked at each other and began to laugh.

Dan played videotapes of himself speaking on television. When he came to a part that he liked, he played it again. But he didn't like seeing his daughter on television.

"I hate it when I see that pacifier in her mouth," Cara said. "I think, How secure could she be if she needs that at age two? Sometimes I wake up and I think I can't face another day without her. At least, I know that she loves to play with telephones. I keep thinking that maybe someday I can call and she'll answer the phone."

"She'll be home a lot sooner than that," Lewis, the lawyer, declared. "The Schmidts have won every court decision in Iowa for the last two years, and still they have no baby. When this toddler finally comes home, the DeBoers will have to bear the responsibility for the problems she'll face. They created this situation by not giving her back."

"Anna is going to hate them for this," Dan said, his voice rising. "When she's eight or nine, she's going to know she's missing something, and what's Robby DeBoer going to say then? 'Oh, by the way, your parents loved you, but we wouldn't give you back'?"

At the time of the hearings, Cara was four months pregnant. "But we could have a dozen kids and they wouldn't replace Anna," Dan said. "If the DeBoers could take Anna without our permission, what's to stop her or anyone else from taking all our children?

"I fought for my son," he continued. "I had visitation, and once I came to carve pumpkins with him and there was a note on the door for me to come another day—and I can hear Travis babbling inside and so I come in and there's my wife with a boyfriend and I punch him out. Another time I come for visitation, the door is locked, and I look through the window and I see her and another guy in bed, and so I break down the door—take it out, molding and all." Dan grinned. "Sometimes you don't know your strength—what you can do. I might have hit my ex-wife a couple of times when we were married, but she could go at it pretty good herself. This guy was too little to hit—he was shaking in his shorts. So I grabbed Travis and left. I didn't want him in that situation. Then I felt bad, so I took him back to his mother. I know what it is not to have your son. I know what it is not to have a father. I know what it is to be adopted. And being adopted will never happen to Anna."

On January 29th, Judge Ager, a tall gentleman of seventy-one, began the hearings on Jessica DeBoer's best interests. M-G-M Studios could not have cast him better: he had a bushy white mustache, a long face, and a kindly voice—startlingly like that of Jimmy Stewart—all of which brought judicial dignity to the emotional proceedings. Marian Faupel, strident and long-winded, hammered away at witnesses. Ager was patient; he reined Faupel in only rarely—when, for example, she asked Jessica's pediatrician to go over and examine Cara Schmidt's mouth to see if she had an unusual gum condition, like the one that Jessica had. Ager made it clear that he would tolerate no mud-slinging, and he declined to let the Schmidts bring in other birth mothers and adoptees to testify about the pain of adoption. Still, the intimate details of all four lives were so cruelly bared that courtroom spectators sometimes squirmed. Robby, under the fire of Marian Faupel's cross-examination, appeared haughty and withdrawn. Cara spoke tearfully about having been coerced by the DeBoers' adoption lawyer, John Monroe, and of being pushed down the hospital corridor in a wheelchair, "knowing in my heart this isn't right—that I shouldn't be leaving my baby behind." Monroe, who took the stand to refute her claims that he had acted improperly, had the upright bearing one might expect of an eminent local lawyer.

Dan Schmidt's mother, mother-in-law, and three sisters all testified that he was loving with children. On the witness stand, Schmidt rocked slightly, as if to comfort himself, and tearfully told of his love for Anna and the pain of his lost childhood. Once, overcome by emotion, he had to leave the courtroom. As they had done in Iowa, the mothers of Dan's two other children testified that he had neglected them. But this time the Schmidts had a star witness of their own: Travis had come from Cedar Rapids, without telling his mother, and he spoke articulately of how his father had been the most meaningful influence on his life. He testified that during Dan's long absence his adoptive father had hit him and treated him worse than he treated his biological children. Dan Schmidt, listening to this, lowered his head and cried.

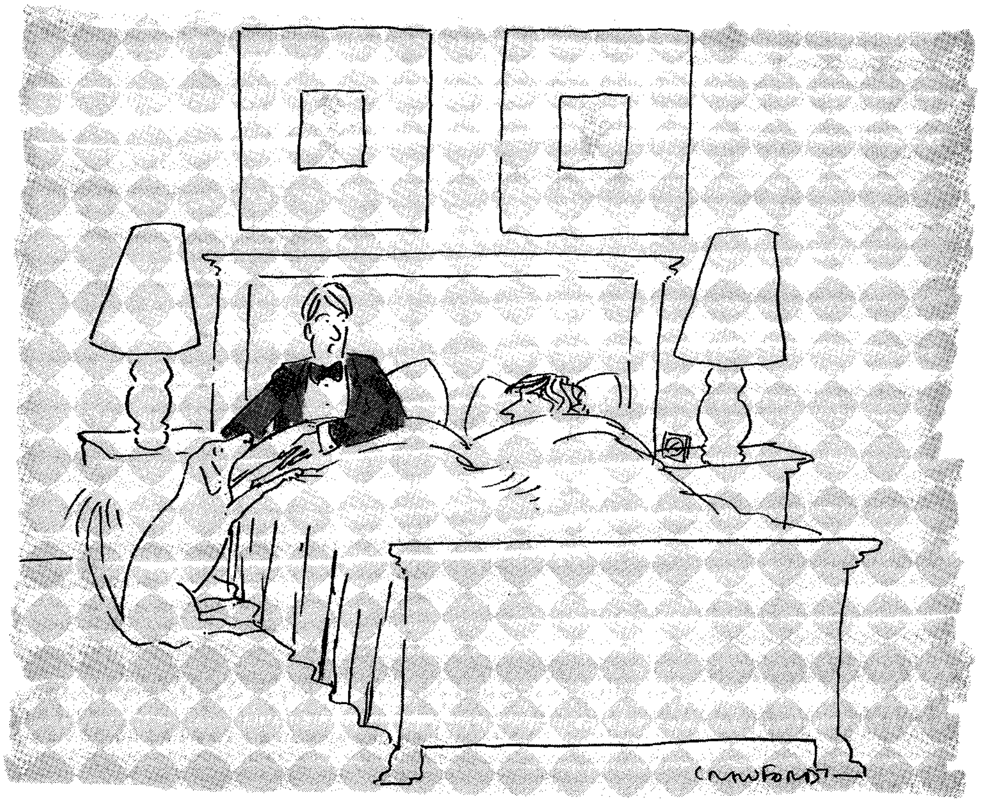
Judge Ager appeared to be particularly affected by the testimony of Dr. Jack Novick, a child psychoanalyst affiliated with the University of Michigan. Novick said that a two-year-old such as this one was in an ecstasy of discovery and emerging independence. Her whole world is centered around her mother; if she lost her primary attachment, she would lose a piece of herself, which she could never recover. All her enjoyment, all her functions would be compromised, Novick said. He added that someone as young as that cannot fall back on memories; that she would think it was her fault that she lost her mother; that she would lose pleasure in her accomplishments; that she would lose the ability to form attachments.

Dr. Beth Clark, a psychologist who had been appointed by the court before the hearings to evaluate the Schmidts and the DeBoers, gave a detailed evaluation of each personality. She had no real concerns about the DeBoers as parents but found Cara to be unusually passive for someone so smart. She said that Cara and Dan did not realize the severity of the problems that their child would face if returned to them. Clark said she thought that the Schmidts would be too afraid of scrutiny and criticism to seek professional help. Instead, she said, they believed that their love would be enough. Clark also said that, although Dan showed strength in the face of adversity, tests indicated he had a potential for substance abuse, had an alarming lack of control over his anger, and blamed others for his problems instead of taking responsibility himself, tending to confuse his own needs with those of his children.

At one point during the hearing, the Schmidts threatened to pack up and go home. Laurie Parker, who had left her family to accompany them to Michigan, and had even been sleeping in their motel room, dissuaded Cara. "You cannot quit," Laurie said. "You have seen what giving up has done to me. You see me on holidays and my son's birthday. You know what I've put up with for twenty years and you are not going to go through that."

Cara wept. "I won't quit, but I just want to go home and be where I'm protected," she said. The Schmidts had maintained from the beginning that the judge had already made up his mind, and that Ann Arbor was solidly behind the DeBoers. Posters for a concert to raise money for Jessica DeBoer were all over the place, and one night when the Schmidts had gone to a country-kitchen restaurant the couple next to them had taken their small child and moved to another table. Another night, a bouquet of flowers had arrived at their room and Cara had been afraid to open it. Laurie had reassured her—she'd recognized the handwriting of a CUB well-wisher.

On the third day of the hearings, Cara was quoted in the Ann Arbor *News* saying she thought her daughter missed her "desperately," and, "I know she will know me. I'm sure of it." The public reaction to Cara's declaration was so negative that the Schmidts made a concession and began calling their daughter Jessica. On February 8th, her

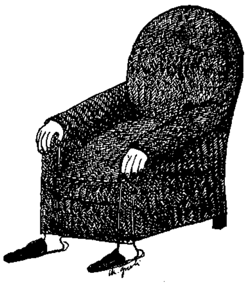


"That's O.K., I'll go—I'm dressed."

second birthday, Dan Schmidt brought in a large bag of presents and approached Robby for the first time. He asked her to give them to Jessica and to tell her they loved her. Robby said that perhaps Dan could give them to Jessica himself, but Faupel, claiming that the DeBoers were trying to trick Dan into violating a court order concerning visitation, immediately stopped the plan.

One day, before the end of the hearing, Robby was driving her car when the voice of Marian Faupel came over the radio, announcing that her clients had won the case. The interviewer was congratulating her. Robby sped home, ran into the house, and tripped and fell on the floor. She screamed at Jan, who was trying to shush her, telling her that Jessi was asleep. "Oh, Jan, we lost! They're going to take her away," Robby sobbed. Jessi came out crying and Robby hugged her, saying, "I'm so sorry, Jessi. My heart is broken." Jan immediately called Suellyn Scarnecchia and found out that Faupel had exaggerated; the only victory the Schmidts had won was a hearing on the jurisdiction issue in the Court of Appeals. Robby and Jan tried to soothe Jessi, but for days afterward she would suddenly come running and ask, "Mama's heart b'oken? Mama's heart fix?"

In her closing argument, Faupel cited the familiar tale of King Solomon and the two women who laid claim to the same baby. Scarnecchia, in response, said that the DeBoers wanted to start a college fund for Jessica if they lost her, but that they would otherwise bow out of her life. "You have more information than Solomon did, Your Honor," she added, "because society now knows that the people who put the child's interests first are her psychological parents."



Judge Ager then left the courtroom, but returned after only half an hour and began to read his ruling. Robby, flushed, looked down and kneaded her hands as he spoke. Jan dabbed at his eyes with a handkerchief. Cara, who had taken notes throughout the eight days of testimony, was still taking notes. Dan leaned back in his chair, looking subdued. Ager declared, "In Michigan, not only the rights of parents . . . are protected, but the rights of the child . . . are paramount."

Ager pointed out that the DeBoer-Schmidt case brought two basic presumptions into conflict: that biological parents should be awarded custody unless they were deemed unfit and that an established custodial environment should not be changed unless it was in the child's best interest. The court, he said, had placed a heavy burden on the DeBoers to prove "by clear and convincing evidence" that the latter principle should triumph. Ager went down the list of criteria that a person had to meet in order to gain custody under the Michigan Child Custody Act. In addressing the category dealing with a person's capacity for guiding a child, Ager said, he had given more consideration to the quality of Dan Schmidt's fathering than he had to the past abandonment of his children: "It bothered me that he [Travis] was brought from the state of Iowa without his mother's consent. . . . She is going to have trouble raising this young lad in the future." Ager went on to say that, while he didn't doubt that Schmidt would give love and affection to the baby, "love is not enough . . . guidance is required," adding, "And example is required." Travis, watching from the gallery, bit his lip and put his head down on the back of the bench in front of him.

Ager found in the DeBoers' favor on every applicable criterion. But the party he really seemed to be thinking about was Jessica. Visibly moved, he said that if she were "plucked from her parents" she might never recover. With that, he officially awarded the DeBoers custody of the child.

Robby began to weep uncontrollably, and so did Jan. They embraced each other and went on crying for several minutes.

Judge Ager put down his papers. "I know how deeply hurt Mr. and Mrs. Schmidt are. . . . I understand they feel they possibly didn't receive the treatment they felt they should during these proceedings. . . . I'd have been devastated if I'd lost any of my four children or, for that matter, my grandchildren. . . . There's no way you can get over this loss at this time." Then he took a breath and, in a voice full of emotion, besought them, "Think of the possibility of saying 'Enough.' . . . Prolonging this battle is going to have a terrible effect on this child. . . . When she's older . . . tell this young woman that you fought your hardest . . . and you'll tell her that 'I love you, I wanted you, it broke my heart.' " Ager said that his eyes had welled up when Jan DeBoer "said that 'someday when this is done and over with, I pray that all four of us and this young girl will have a relationship.' " He went on, "And I think this possible. But I don't think it's possible if you're going to continue fighting, fighting, and fighting." To the Schmidts he said that if they gave up they'd be "heroes," adding, "People all over the United States would say, 'These people have acted in the best interest of the child.' "

As Ager made his ruling, the Iowa Juvenile Court came in with one of its own: a summary judgment, two years after her appeal, restoring Cara Schmidt's parental rights. It would be ludicrous not to return them to the mother, the court said, since the biological father already had his rights. The court did not consider whether Cara's charges of fraud and coercion against John Monroe were valid. Ten Eick said later, "He was not given the opportunity to rebut what we know are false allegations, and the reputation of a fine lawyer was thereby impugned. The Schmidts accuse the DeBoers of not obeying Iowa law, but Cara used the law the way it wasn't intended to be used. She bypassed the adoption statute, which says she has only a limited period to revoke her rights, and won a motion for a new hearing on the grounds that she was defrauded. And then she doesn't even have to prove her charges."

Ironically, this is the very argument that the Schmidts went on to use when they appealed Judge Ager's decision—that the DeBoers, having lost in Iowa, should not have been given a second chance in Michigan. The Michigan Court of Appeals is now considering whether Ager had jurisdiction to intervene and hold the hearings, and whether the DeBoers have any legal standing to sue for custody. If the judges rule for the DeBoers, they can do it on the ground that the U.C.C.J.A. allows Michigan to claim Jessica as its own. If they rule for the Schmidts, they can say that Michigan must respect the law of Iowa, which declared the DeBoers' adoption petition invalid and the Schmidts the legal parents.

“Mercury, Mars, this is the bitch goddess, Success.”

Scarnecchia is nervous, because, no matter what the merits of the case, the body of law in Michigan, as elsewhere, favors biological parents. In fact, the Michigan Supreme Court, in Bowie v. Arder, recently held that “third-party nonparents”—typically, relatives—cannot drag biological parents into court to try to take away their children. Scarnecchia argues, however, that the Bowie case does not apply, because the DeBoers did not drag the Schmidts into court; it was the Schmidts who initially sued for custody, in the state of Iowa. Still, Scarnecchia concedes, “It is a radical thing to ask a court to ignore the Supreme Court order of another state. It will take courage on the part of the appellate judges, but, if they want to, there is ample legal precedent in Michigan to support the DeBoers' case.”

Many child-custody experts say that such a decision would dangerously erode the custody rights of biological parents and might create new law. Scarnecchia replies that new law which makes the rights of children paramount is long overdue.

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BOTH the Schmidts and the DeBoers spent the weeks after the Michigan hearings anxiously anticipating the Appeals Court ruling, due by April 6th. Once again, the Schmidts were preparing for their daughter's imminent return, and, once again, the DeBoers were preparing for her loss. Both couples say that if they lose they will appeal to the Michigan Supreme Court and, if necessary, to the United States Supreme Court, which could prolong the case for months, even years. However, it is possible that a resolution will come more quickly: the higher courts could refuse to hear the appeals, letting the decision of the Michigan Court of Appeals stand.

Meanwhile, the Schmidt-DeBoer case has caused both pro-adoption lobbyists and CUB sympathizers to intensify efforts to enact adoption reform. The collision of their opposite philosophies, however, has often stalled progress. The National Conference of Commissioners for Uniform State Laws, with representatives from all states, has been trying for three years to draft a uniform adoption act, but the drafting meetings have been mired in controversy. CUB is pushing to unseal all adoption records, past and present, a proposal that was defeated at the last national conference meeting. Nevertheless, other CUB proposals, such as longer periods for birth mothers to change their minds and visitation of adopted children by birth parents, are being considered. The National Council for Adoption has drafted a model for a putative-fathers registry, which would require men who think they might be birth fathers to register with the state. If they did not register, they would be unable to sue for custody after the child had already been placed for adoption, as Daniel Schmidt did. So far, five states, including New York, have established these registries. CUB believes that if a birth father has not signed a release of parental rights, he should be able to get his child back at any time.

The plight of Jessica DeBoer has highlighted how children have got lost in these parental battles, but both sides of the adoption dispute claim that their position would best protect children. “If adoption were made into a kind of guardianship,” says CUB president Janet Fenton, “children would not suffer from the lack of honesty and the secrecy in adoption. They would know who their real parents were and that they could go back to them at any time.” But Mary Beth Seader, the National Council for Adoption vice-president, says that, because of the anti-adoption movement, adoptive couples already feel the process is unsafe. “People don't trust the permanency of adoption anymore. They don't want to be seen as babysitters, they don't want to lose their children. There are children out there in our country who need to be adopted, and in the end it is the children who will suffer.” ♦

PROFILE

SHOOT THE MOON

Felipe Lopez may be the one in a million—a high-school basketball star who can play his way out of the inner city and into the N.B.A. And, to get him there, Lopez's ability to shield himself from the world around him will prove no less vital than his on-court talents.

BY SUSAN ORLEAN

WHITE men in suits follow Felipe Lopez everywhere he goes. Felipe lives in Mott Haven, in the South Bronx. He is a junior at Rice High School, which is on the corner of 124th Street and Lenox Avenue, in Harlem, and he plays guard for the school basketball team, the Rice Raiders. The white men are ubiquitous. They rarely miss one of Felipe's games or tournaments. They have absolute recall of his best minutes of play. They are authorities on his physical condition. They admire his feet, which are big and pontoon-shaped, and his wrists, which have a loose, silky motion. Not long ago, I sat with the white men at a game between Rice and All Hallows High School. My halftime entertainment was listening to a debate between two of them—a college scout and a Westchester contractor who is a high-school basketball fan—about whether Felipe had grown a half inch over Christmas break. "I know this kid," the scout said as the second half started. "A half inch is not something I would miss." The white men believe that Felipe is the best high-school basketball player in the country. They often compare him to Michael Jordan, and are betting he will become one of the greatest basketball players to emerge from New York City since Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. This conjecture provides them with suspended, savory excitement and a happy premonition. Following Felipe is like hanging around with someone you think is going to win the lottery someday.

At the moment, Felipe is six feet five. He would like to be six feet seven. His shoes are size 12. He buys his pants at big-and-tall-men stores. His ears, which are small and high-set, look exaggeratedly tiny, because he keeps his hair shaved close to his skull. He has blackish-brown eyes and a big, vivid tongue—I know this only because his tongue sometimes sticks out when he is playing hard, and against his skin, which is very dark, it looks like a pink pennant. His voice is slurry; all his words have round edges. He is as skinny as a bean pole, and has long shins and thin forearms and sharp, chiselled knees. His hands are gigantic. Walking down the street, he gets a lot of looks because of his height, but he is certainly not a horse of a kid—not one of those man-size boys who fleshed out in fifth grade and whose adult forms are in place by the time they're thirteen. He is all outline: he doesn't look like a stretched-out average-size person—he looks like a sketch of a huge person which hasn't yet been colored in.

On the court, Felipe's body seems unusually well organized. His movements are quick and liquid. I have seen him sail horizontally through thin air. High-school players are often rough and lumbering, and they mostly shoot flat-footed, but Felipe has an elegant, buoyant game. He floats around the edge of the court and then springs on the ball and sprints away. When he moves toward the basket, it looks as if he were speed-skating, and then, suddenly, he rises in the air, lingers, and shoots. His shot is smooth and lovely, with a loopy arc. Currently, he averages twenty-six points and nine rebounds per game, and he is within striking distance of the all-time high-school scoring record for New York State. He has great court vision, soft hands, a brisk three-point shot, and the speed to take the ball inside and low. He is usually the fastest man in the fast break. He can handle the ball like a point guard, and he beats bigger players defensively, because of his swiftness and his body control. When he is not on a court, though, the way he walks is complicated and sloppy. He seems to walk this way on purpose, to make light of his size and disguise his grace.

Before I met Felipe, people told me I would find him cuddly. Everything I knew about him—that he is a *boy*, that he is a *teen-age* boy, that he is a six-foot-five teen-age-boy *jock*—made this pretty hard to believe, but it turns out to be true. He is actually the sweetest person I know. At some point during our time together, it occurred to me that he could be a great basketball hustler, because he seems naïve and eager—the ideal personality for attracting competitive big shots on the basketball court. It happens that he is not the least bit of a hustler. But he is also not nearly as naïve and eager as he appears. He once told me that he likes to make people think of him as a clown, because then they will never accuse him of being a snob. He also said that he likes to be friendly to everyone, so that no one will realize he's figuring out whom he can trust.

Felipe spoke no English at all when he moved to New York from the Dominican Republic, four years ago, but he quickly picked up certain phrases, including "crash the boards," "he's bugging out," "get the hell out of the paint," and "oh, my goodness." Now he speaks English comfortably, with a rich Dominican accent—the words tumble and click together, like stones being tossed in a polisher. "Oh, my goodness" remains his favorite phrase. It is a utility expression that reveals his modesty, his manners, his ingenuousness, and his usual state of mind, which is one of pleasant and guileless surprise at the remarkable nature of his life. I have heard him use it to comment on the expectation that he will someday be a rich and famous player in the N.B.A., and on the fact that he was recently offered half a million dollars by people from Spain to put aside his homework and come play in their league, and on the fact that he is already considered a seminal national export by citizens of the Dominican Republic, who are counting on him to be the first Dominican in the N.B.A., and on the fact

Felipe Lopez, photographed by Richard Avedon in New York City, February 25, 1993.

that he is growing so fast that he once failed to recognize his own pants. Sometimes he will use the phrase in circumstances where his teammates and friends might be inclined to say something more dynamic. One night this winter, I was sitting around at school with Felipe and his teammates, watching a videotape of old Michael Jordan highlights. The tape had been edited for maximum excitement, and most of the boys on the team were responding with more and more baroque constructions of foul language. At one point, Jordan was shown leaping past the Celtics center Robert Parish, and someone said, "Yo, feature that, bro! He's busting the Chief's face."

"Busting his fucking face," another one said.

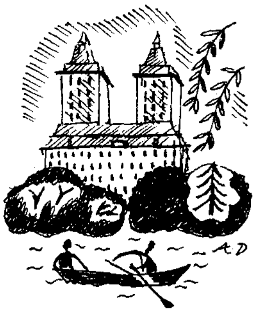
"Busting his goddam big-ass face."

"He's got it going on. Now Jordan's going to bust his foul-loving big-ass mama's-boy dope black ass."

On the tape, Jordan slammed the ball through the hoop and Parish crumpled to the floor. While the other boys were applauding and swearing, Felipe moved closer to the television and then said, admiringly, "Oh, my goodness."

FELIPE'S life is unusually well populated. He is very close to his family. He is named Luis Felipe, after his father. His older brother Anthony is one of the managers of the Rice High School team. Anthony is a square-shouldered, avid man of twenty-five who played amateur basketball in the Dominican Republic and in New York until his ankle was badly injured in a car accident. Until last month, when he was laid off, he worked at a Manhattan printshop and had a boss who appreciated basketball and tolerated the time Anthony spent with the team. Anthony is rarely away from Felipe's side, and when he is there he is usually peppering him with directions and commentary in a hybrid of Spanish and English: "*Felipe, mal, muy mal! Cómo estás* you go so aggressive to a lay-up?" A couple of times a month, Anthony makes the rounds of Felipe's teachers to see if his B average is holding up. "If he's not doing well, then I go back and let my people know," Anthony says. "It's nice, it's beautiful to be a superstar, but if he doesn't work hard he doesn't play." Once, Felipe's father forbade him to travel to a tournament, because he had neglected to wash the dishes. This made Felipe cry, but in hindsight he is philosophical about it. "He was right," he says. "I didn't do my dishes." Felipe is also close to Lou DeMello, his coach at Rice, and to Dave Jones, his coach with the Gauchos, a basketball organization in the Bronx which he plays for during the summer, and to Louis d'Almeida, the founder of the Gauchos. Felipe says he sometimes gets basketball advice from his mother, Carmen, and from Maura Beattie, a teacher at Rice who tutors him in English. Neither of them plays. "You know what, though?" Felipe says. "They know something." His primary hobby is sleeping, but his other pastime is talking on the phone for hours to his girlfriend, who is an American, a resident of Brooklyn, and a basketball fan.

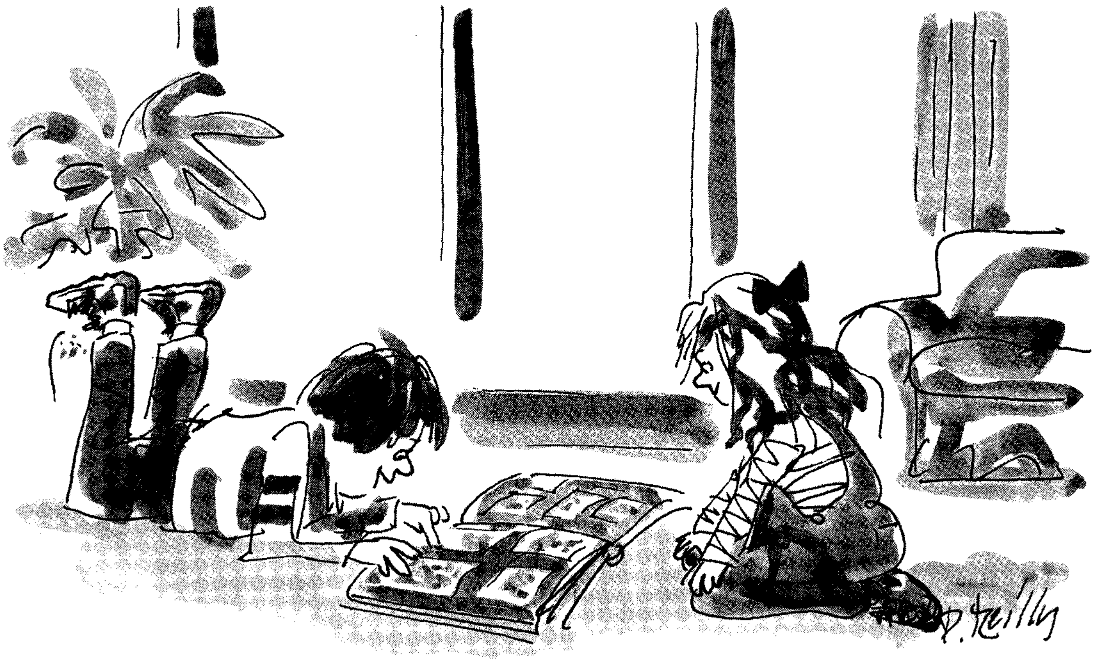
Sometimes his life seems overpopulated. He has so far received four crates of letters from college coaches and recruiters pitching woo at him. Some make seductive mention of the large seating capacities of their arenas. Basketball-camp directors call regularly, saying that they would like Felipe Lopez to be in attendance. Officials of Puerto Rico's summer basketball league have requested the honor of his presence this summer. There are corporate marketing executives who would very much like to be his friends. Not everyone crowding into his life wishes him well. There are people who might wittingly or unwittingly mislead him. Felipe has been warned by his father, for example, never to have sex without a condom, because some girls who pretend to like him might really have appraised him as a lucrative paternity suit. Last year, Felipe and another player were invited to appear in a Nintendo television commercial, and the commercial nearly cost them their college athletic eligibility, because no one had warned them that accepting money for a commercial was against N.C.A.A. regulations. There are people who are jealous of Felipe. There are coaches whose hearts he has broken, because they're not at one of the colleges Felipe is interested in—Florida State, Syracuse, St. John's, Seton Hall, North Carolina, Georgia Tech, U.C.L.A., Indiana, Arizona, Ohio State, and Kansas. There are coaches who put aside all other strategy except Keep Felipe Lopez Away from the Ball. Some opponents will go out of their way to play him hard. There are kids on his own team who have bitter moments about Felipe. And there are contrarians, who would like to get in early on a backlash and look clairvoyant and hype-resistant by declaring him, at only eighteen and only a junior in high school, already overrated. His response to all this is to be nice to everyone. I have never seen him angry, or even peeved, but when he isn't playing well his entire body droops and he looks completely downcast. It is an alarming sight, because he looks so hollowed out anyway.



"Wait till this kid gets a body," Coach DeMello likes to say. During practice, DeMello will sometimes jump up and down in front of Felipe and yell, "Felipe! Make yourself *big!*" The best insult I ever heard DeMello hurl at Felipe was during a practice one afternoon when Felipe was playing lazily. DeMello strode onto the court, looked up at Felipe, and said acidly, "You're six-five, but you're trapping like you're *five-eleven.*" Anthony Lopez can hardly wait until Felipe gets a body, so sometimes during the off-season he will take him to the steep stairway at the 155th Street subway station, in the Bronx, and make him run up and down the hundred and thirty steps a few times to try to speed the process along. Felipe is less than crazy about this exercise, although he appreciates the advantages that more bulk might give him: "When I first came here, I could tell the guys were looking at me and thinking, Who is this skinny kid? Then they would say, 'Hey, let's'—excuse my language—'bust his ass.' "

Felipe's body is an unfinished piece of work. It gets people thinking. Tom Konchalski, a basketball scout who follows high schools in the Northeast, suggested recently that if Felipe ever wanted to give up basketball he could be a world-class sprinter. Coach DeMello said to me once that, much as he hated to admit it, he thought Felipe had the perfect pitcher's body. Felipe's mother told me that even though Felipe is now a fast-break expert, she thought he should sharpen his ability to penetrate to the basket and go for the big finish—say, a windmill slam dunk. I once asked her whose style of play she wanted Felipe to emulate, and she pointed to a picture of Michael Jordan and said, in Spanish, "If he would eat more, he could be like the man who jumps."

Felipe's father, who played amateur baseball in the Dominican Republic, thought he saw in his son the outlines of a first baseman, and steered Felipe toward baseball when he was little. But Felipe was hit in the nose by a wild throw, and decided that, in spite of its popularity in the Dominican Republic and the success Dominican ballplayers have had in the United States, baseball was not his game. Maura Beattie, his English tutor, is an excellent tennis player, and one day, just for fun, she took Felipe with her to the courts. She was curious to see if someone with Felipe's build and abilities could master a racquet sport. He beat her. It was the first time he'd held a tennis racquet in his life. Another time, the two of them went to play miniature golf in Rockaway, and Felipe, who had never held a putter before, made a hole in one. Some of this prowess can be attributed to tremendous physical coördination and the biomechanical advantages of being tall and thin and limber. Felipe Lopez is certainly a born athlete. But he may also be one of those rarer cases—a person who is just born lucky, whose whole life seems an effortless conveyance of dreams, and to whom other people's dreams adhere. This aura of fortune is so powerful that it is easy to forget that for the time being, and for a while longer, Felipe Lopez is still just an immigrant teen-ager who lives in a scary neighborhood in the South Bronx and goes to high school in Harlem, where bad things happen every day.



"And this one is my grandma and her current lover."

Currently, there are five hundred and eighteen thousand male high-school basketball players in the United States. Of these, only nineteen thousand will end up on college teams—not even four per cent. Less than one per cent will play for Division One colleges—the most competitive. The present N.B.A. roster has three hundred and sixty-seven players, and each year only forty or fifty new players are drafted. What these numbers forebode is disappointment for many high-school basketball players. That disappointment is disproportionate among black teen-agers. A recent survey of high-school students by Northeastern University's Center for the Study of Sport in Society reported that fifty-nine per cent of black teen-age athletes thought they would continue to play on a college team, compared with thirty-nine per cent of white teen-agers. Only sixteen per cent of the white athletes expected that they would play for the pros; forty-three per cent of the blacks expected that they would, and nearly half of all the kids said they thought it would be easier for black males to become professional basketball players than to become lawyers or doctors. Scouts have told me that everyone on the Rice team will probably be able to get a free college education by playing basketball, and so far all the players have received recruiting letters from several schools. The scouts have also said that it will require uncommonly hard work for any of the boys on the team other than Felipe to ascend to the N.B.A.

Every so often, scouts' forecasts are wrong. Some phenomenal high-school players get injured or lazy or fat or drug-addled or bored, or simply level off and then vanish from the sport, and, by the same token, a player of no particular reputation will once in a while emerge from out of nowhere and succeed. That was the case with the N.B.A. all-stars Karl Malone and Charles Barkley, who both played through high school in obscurity; but most other N.B.A. players were standouts starting in their early teens. Most people who follow high-school basketball teams that are filled with kids from poor families and rough neighborhoods encourage the kids to put basketball in perspective, to view it not as a catapult into some fabulous, famous life but as something practical—a way to get out, to get an education, to learn the way around a different, better world. The simple fact that only one in a million people in this country will ever play for the N.B.A. is often pointed out to the kids, but that still doesn't seem to stop them from dreaming.

Being told that you might be that one person in a million would deform many people's characters, but it has not made Felipe cynical or overly interested in himself. In fact, his blitheness can be almost unnerving. One evening when we were together, I watched him walk past a drug deal on 125th Street and step off the curb into traffic, and then he whiled away an hour in a fast-food restaurant where several ragged, hostile people repeatedly pestered him for change. He hates getting hurt on the court, but out in the world he is not very careful with himself. When you are around him, you can't help feeling that he is a boy whose body is a savings account, and it is one that is uninsured. But being around him is also to be transported by his nonchalant confidence about luck—namely, that it happens because it happens, and that it will happen for Felipe, because things are meant to go his way. This winter, he and the Rice Raiders were in Las Vegas playing in a tournament. One evening, a few of them went into a casino and attached themselves to the slot machines. Felipe's first quarter won him a hundred quarters. Everyone told him to stop while he was ahead, but he continued. "I wanted to play," he says. "I thought, I had nothing before I started, now I have something, so I might as well play. So I put some more quarters in, and—oh, my goodness!—I won twelve hundred more quarters. What can I say?"

CATTAILS: A MARSH IN MARCH

It's like the morning-after after some
outré / ultimate year-end blowout,
and clearly whatever
cleanup was started was a shall we say
halfhearted endeavor . . .
Most of the loose-strung bunting's been
taken down but hasn't yet been swept away,
the floor's a mess—a massacre—

of broken-limbed furniture,

shattered glass is everywhere, and wet
wadded heaps of trampled favors await
the incinerator.
Of course every party reaches a close
sooner or later,
though you'd never know it from those (still
at it—always the last to go) tight-knit politicos,
murmuring, nodding, prodding at each other

with their ponderous cigars.

—Brad Leithauser

At three o'clock one afternoon this winter, I went over to the high school to watch Felipe and the Rice team practice. I hadn't met Felipe before that afternoon, but I had heard a lot about him from friends who follow high-school basketball. As it happens, Felipe's reputation often precedes him. Before he moved to this country, he was living in Santiago, in the Dominican Republic. The Lopez family had been leaving the Dominican Republic in installments for thirty years. A grandmother had moved to New York in the sixties, followed by Felipe's father in 1982, and then, in 1986, by his mother and Anthony. For three years, Felipe stayed in the Dominican Republic with another older brother, Anderson, and his sister, Sayonara. At age eight, he started playing basketball in provincial leagues, sometimes being bumped up to older age groups because he was so good. He already had a following. "I would hear from a lot of Dominicans about how good he was getting," Anthony says now. "It made me curious. When I left him in the Dominican Republic, he was just a little kid who I would boss around. He was my—you know, my delivery guy." When more visas were obtained, in 1989, Felipe and Sayonara moved to New York. Anthony took Felipe to a playground near the family's apartment and challenged him one-on-one, decided that the rumors were true, and then took him to try out for the Gauchos. Lou d'Almeida says that people were already talking about Felipe by then. Many high-school coaches had intelligence on Felipe by the time he started school. Lou DeMello first saw him in a citywide tournament for junior-high players. Felipe was in the Midget Division. "He looked like a man among boys," DeMello says now. "If I could have, I would have taken him then and started him *then* on the Rice varsity. I swear to God. At the time, he was in eighth grade."

Rice High School is a small all-boys Catholic school, which was founded in 1938 and is run by the Congregation of Christian Brothers. It is the only Catholic high school still open in Harlem. Currently, it has about four hundred students. Tuition is two thousand dollars a year, which many of the students can afford only with the help of scholarship money from private sponsors, including some basketball fans. At school, students have to wear a tie, real trousers, and real shoes, not sneakers. There is also a prohibition against beepers. The school is in a chunky brick building with a tiny, blind entrance on 124th Street, close to some Chinese luncheonettes, some crack dealers, and some windswept vacant tenements. A lot of unregulated commerce is conducted on the sidewalks nearby, and last year a business dispute in an alley across from the school was resolved with semi-automatic weapons, but the building itself emanates gravity and calm. Inside, it is frayed but sturdy and pleasant. There is an elevator, but it often isn't working; the gym, which occupies most of the top two floors of the school, is essentially a sixth-floor walkup. The basketball court is only fifty-five feet long instead of the usual ninety-four, and the walls are less than a foot away from the sidelines. It would qualify as regulation-size in Lilliput. Rice has to play its games in a borrowed gym—usually the Gauchos' facility, in the Bronx.

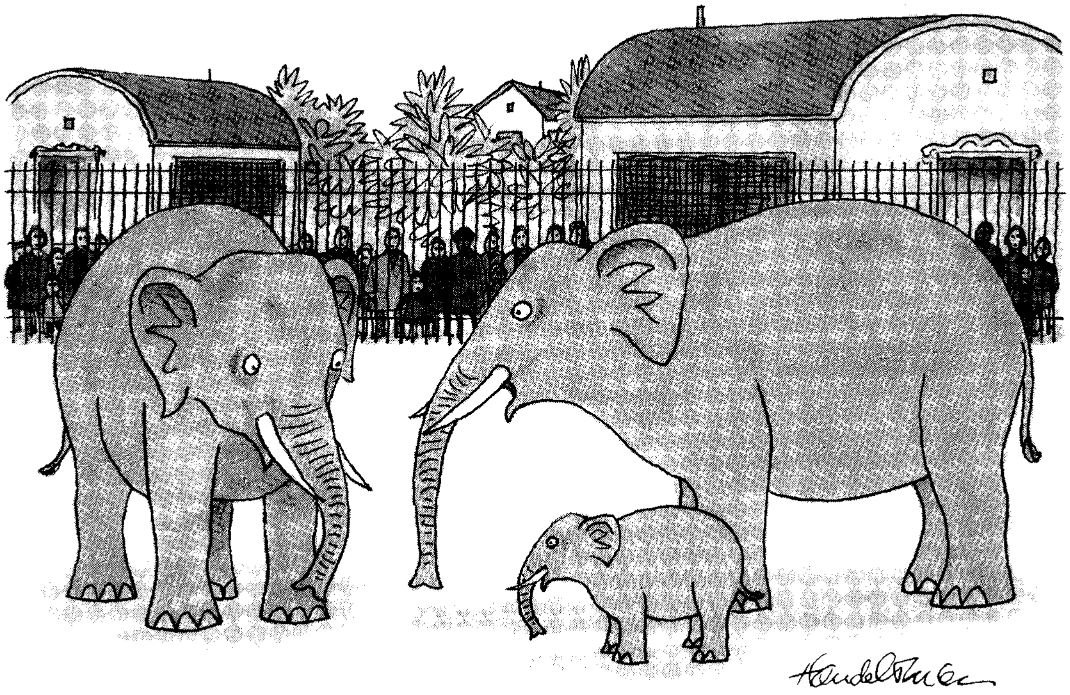
At the time Coach DeMello first heard about Felipe Lopez, the Rice Raiders had a win-loss record of eight and thirteen, tattered ten-year-old uniforms, and an inferiority complex. Catholic League basketball in New York City is a particularly bad place for any of these. Since the early eighties, the Catholic schools in New York have had ferocious rivalries, fancy shoes and uniforms from friendly sporting-goods companies, and most of the best players in the city. College teams and the N.B.A. are loaded with New York City Catholic League alumni: Jamal Mashburn, now at Kentucky, attended Cardinal Hayes; the Nets' Kenny Anderson and the Houston Rockets' Kenny Smith went to Archbishop Molloy; the Pacers' Malik Sealy, Syracuse's Adrian Autry, and North Carolina's Brian Reese all went to St. Nicholas of Tolentine; the Pistons' Olden Polynice attended All Hallows; Chris Mullin, of Golden State, went to Xaverian; Mark Jackson, now of the Clippers, went to Bishop Loughlin. Rice had won the city Catholic-school championship in 1966 and proceeded to become steadily undistinguished over the next few decades. Four years ago, Lou DeMello took over as head coach. First, he persuaded Nike—and later Reebok and Converse—to donate shoes and uniforms to the team. Then he started scouting Midget Division players who might have a future at Rice. The Gaucho coaches have a cordial relationship with DeMello and began pointing players like Felipe his way. Last year, the Rice Raiders reached the finals of the city championship. This year, they are ranked in the top twenty high schools nationally—the first time they have been ranked there for twenty-seven years.

Coach DeMello is short and trim, and has bright eyes and a big mustache and an air of uncommon intensity, like someone who is just about to sneeze. His usual attire consists of nylon warmup suits that are very generously sized. The first time I saw him in street clothes, he looked as if someone had let his air out. He speaks with a New York accent, but in fact he was born in Brazil, and played soccer there. His motivational specialty is the crisp reprobation wrapped around a sweet hint of redemptive possibility—stick before carrot. When addressing the team, he is prone to mantra-like repetitions of his maxims, as in "Listen up. Listen up. I want you to go with your body. Go with your body. Go with your body. I want you to keep your foot in the paint. Your foot in the paint. Your foot in the paint. In the paint. And put the ball on the floor. The ball on the floor. On the floor."

This particular afternoon, Coach DeMello was especially hypnotic. The team was getting ready for its first out-of-town tournament of the year, the Charm City/Big Apple Challenge, in Baltimore, which would be played in the Baltimore Arena and televised on a cable channel. The Raiders would be facing Baltimore Southern High School, one of the best teams in the area. When I arrived at the Rice gym, the Raiders had been scrimmaging for an hour. Now, during a break, Coach DeMello was chanting strategy. "You guys are in a funk," he said. Someone dropped the ball, and it made an elastic *poing!* sound and rolled to the wall. "Gerald, hold the ball," DeMello went on. He clasped his hands behind his back. "Hold the ball. O.K. You guys are in a funk. You got to get your head in the game. Your head in the game. We're going up against a serious team in Baltimore. They do a hell of a job on help. A hell of a job. A. Hell. Of. A. Job. We need leaders on the floor. Leaders on the floor. All we want to do is contain. Contain. Contain. So you better hit the boards. Hit the boards. The boards."

Everyone nodded. The Rice Raiders are Felipe, Reggie Freeman, Yves Jean, Gerald Cox, Melvin McKey, Scientific Mapp, Gary Saunders, Gil Eagan, Kojo Lockhart, Rodney Jones, Robert Johnson, and Jamal Livingston. Melvin, the point guard, is usually called Ziggy. Jamal, the center, is known as Stretch. Gerald, who also plays center, is known as G-Money. Scientific, the reserve point guard, is known as Science. All of them are known, familiarly, as B, which is short for "bro," which is short for "brother." During practice, they are solemn and focussed. During a game, they are ardent and intense, as if their lives depended on it. Before and after each game, they stand in a circle, make a stack of their right hands, and shout, "One, two, three, Rice! Four, five, six, family!"

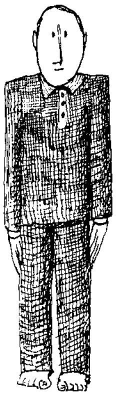
Most of the Raiders live in the Bronx or upper Manhattan. Once, after a game, I rode in the van with an assistant coach as he dropped the team members off at their homes. A few of them lived in plain, solid-looking housing projects and some in walkups that, at least from the outside, looked bleak. No one lived in a very nice building. Some of the kids have families that come to all their games and monitor their schoolwork; some have families that have fallen apart. Six of the twelve live with only their mothers. Ziggy lives with his uncle, and



" 'Born in conservation,' if you don't mind. 'Captivity' has negative connotations."

the five others have a mother and a father at home. Each of them has at least one person somewhere in his life who arranges to send him to attend a disciplined and serious-minded parochial school. Sometimes it's not a parent; the Gauchos, for instance, send a number of basketball players to school. The coaches and teachers I met at Rice are white. Most of the teachers are Catholic brothers. The basketball team is all black, and none of its members are Catholic, although Gary told me once that he was thinking of converting, because "being Catholic seems like a pretty cool thing." There is currently a debate in the Catholic Church about financing schools that used to have Catholic students from the surrounding parish but are now largely black and non-Catholic, their purpose having shifted, along with neighborhood demographics, from one of service to the Church to one of contribution to the inner city. The debate may also have a flip side. I had heard that for a time one player's father, a devout Muslim, was unhappy that his son was being coached by a white man. But Coach DeMello resisted being drawn into an argument about something no one on the team ever paid attention to, and the crisis eventually passed. I didn't think of race very often while I spent time with the team. I thought more about winning and losing, and about how your life could be transformed from one to the other if you happened to be good at a game.

The seniors on the team are Yves Jean, Gerald Cox, and Reggie Freeman. Yves has signed a letter of intent to go to Pitt-Johnstown, which is a Division Two school; Gerald and Reggie are going to the University of South Carolina and the University of Texas, respectively, which are both in Division One. Yves grew up in Lake Placid. He was more fluent in ice fishing than in basketball when he moved to New York, but he is big and strong and has learned the game well enough, even as a second language. Usually, he looks pleasantly amazed when he makes a successful play. Gerald and Reggie are handsome, graceful players who would have been bigger stars this year if it weren't for Felipe. Gerald is dimpled and droll and flirtatious. Reggie has a long, smooth poker face and consummate cool. At times, he looks rigid with submerged disappointment. I remember Coach DeMello's telling me that when Reggie was a sophomore he was waiting patiently for Jerry McCullough, then the senior star, to leave for college, so that at last he would be the team's main man. Then Felipe came. Reggie and Felipe now have a polite rapport that fits together like latticework over their rivalry.



The team is a changeable entity. Some of the kids have bounced on and off the squad because of their grades. One of the players has had recurring legal problems. The girlfriend of another one had a baby last year, and because of that he missed so much school that for some time he wasn't allowed to play on the team. When I first started hanging around with the Raiders, Rodney Jones wasn't on the roster, having had discipline problems and some academic troubles. Sometimes the boys get sick of each other. They practice together almost every day for several hours; they travel together to games and tournaments, which can sometimes last as long as two weeks; and they see each other all day in classrooms, at the Gaucho gym, and on the street. Usually, they have an easy camaraderie. During the other times, as soon as they are done with practice they quickly head their own ways.

"Are you guys listening to me? Are you listening?" DeMello was saying. He was now joined by Bobby Gonzalez, an assistant coach, who was nodding and murmuring "Uh-huh" after everything he said. Gonzalez handed DeMello a basketball. DeMello curled it to his left side, and then held his right hand up, one finger in the air, as if he were checking wind direction. "One more thing. One more thing. If there's one player you guys want to be looking up to right now, I'll tell you who it is."

"Uh-huh," Bobby Gonzalez said.

"That guy is Reggie Freeman. Reggie Freeman." No expression crossed Reggie's face. Felipe, who was standing on the other side of the circle, flexed his neck, rotated his shoulders, and then stood still, a peaceful expression on his face. "Reggie is the most unselfish player here. He is the most unselfish. I want you to remember that. He's grown a lot. That's who you should be looking at. O.K."

"Uh-huh."

DeMello bounced the ball hard, signalling the end of practice. The boys circled and counted: "One, two, three, Rice! Four, five, six, family!" They straggled out of the gym, talking in small groups.

"I never been to Baltimore."

"Let me ask you something. You think Larry Bird's a millionaire?"

"Larry Bird? I don't know. A millionaire. Magic's a millionaire."

"Magic's a millionaire, and he didn't have fifty-nine cents to buy himself a little hat and now he's going to die. The man's stupid."

"I don't know if Larry Bird's a millionaire. I do know he's never been to Harlem, and he's never done the Electric Slide."

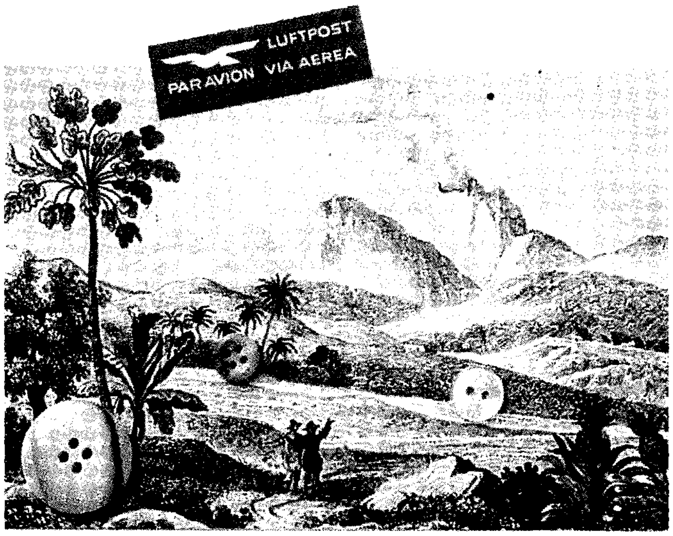
FELIPE on his development as a player:

"Back in my country, I was just a little guy. I tried to dunk, but I couldn't. I tried and I tried. Then, one day, I dunked. Oh, my goodness. Three months later, I was dunking everything, every way—with two hands, backwards, backwards with two hands. I can do a three-sixty dunk. It's easy. You know, you jump up backwards with the ball and then spin around while you're in the air—and *pow!* I'm working all the time on my game. If Coach DeMello says he wants me to work on my ball handling, then I just work at it, work at it, work at it, until it's right. In basketball, you always are working, even on the things you already know.

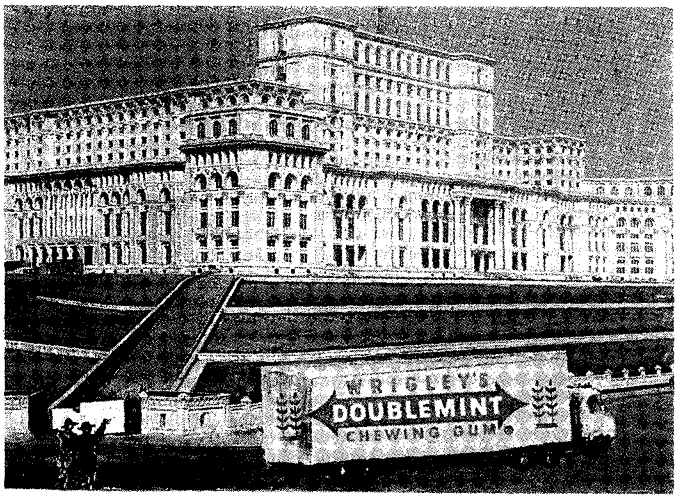
"When I come to this country, I was real quiet, because I didn't speak any English, so all I did was dunk. On the court, playing, I had to learn the words for the plays, but you don't have to talk, so I was O.K. My coach used his hands to tell me what to do, and then I learned the English words for it. There aren't too many Spanish kids at school. I know a lot of kids, though. I meet kids from all over the country at tournaments and at summer camps. If you do something good, then you start meeting people, even if you don't want to. Sometimes it's bouncing in my head that people are talking about me, saying good things, and that some people are talking about me and saying bad things, saying, like, ARTIST AT LARGE BY EUGÈNE MIHAESCO

WISH YOU WERE HERE

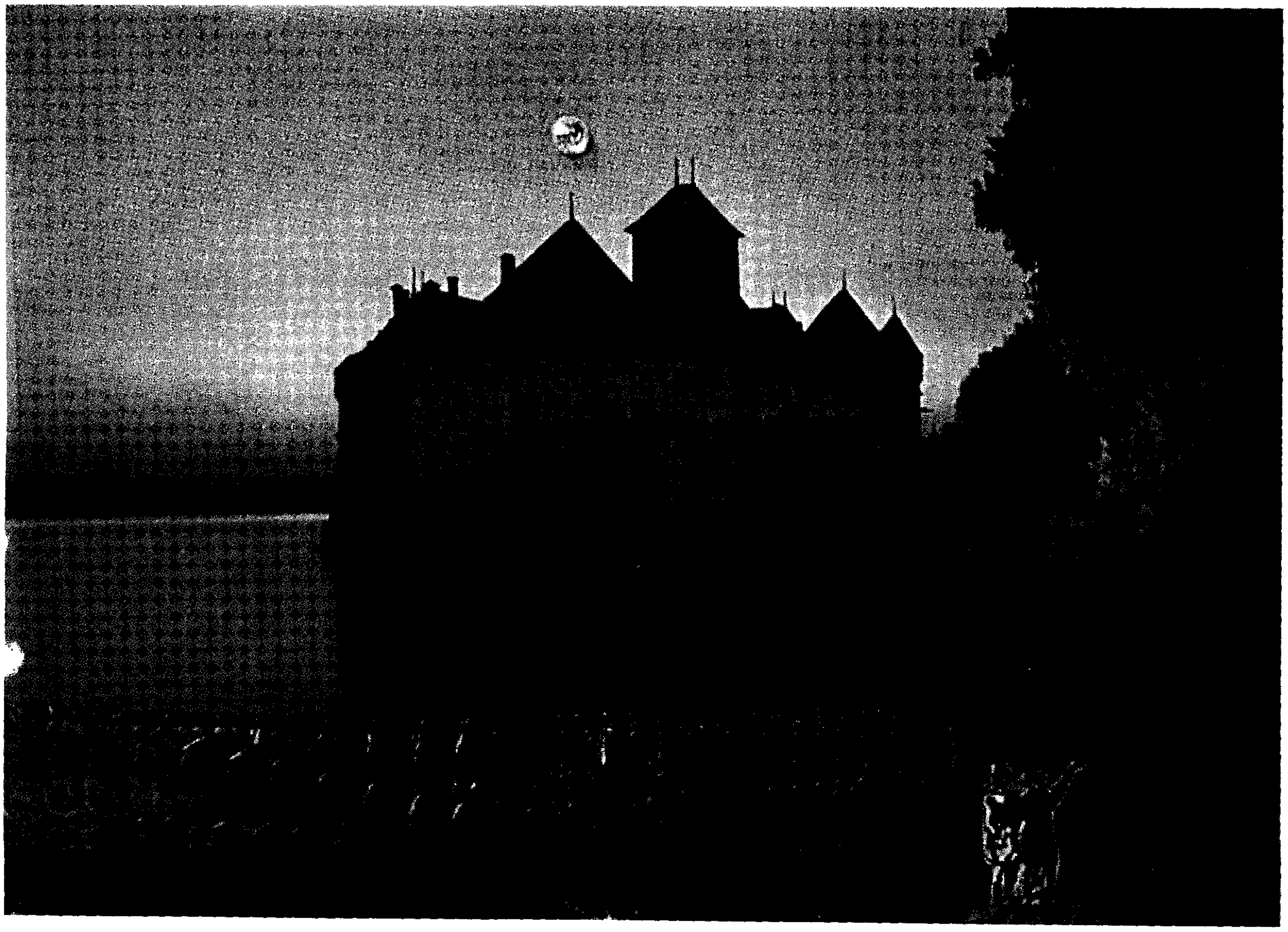
New and improved versions of classic postcard scenes.


LUFTPOST
PAR AVION VIA AEREA

Mt. Buttoni—after the eruption.


WRIGLEY'S
DOUBLEMINT
CHEWING GUM

Ceaușescu's palace—after the fall.



Loch Leman—after the monster.

"I hope his dark side is more interesting."

• •

'Oh, he thinks he's all that,' but that's life. That's life. I don't like when it's bouncing in my head, but I just do what I'm supposed to do. I'm quick. I broke the record for the fifty-yard dash when I was in junior high school—I did it in five point two seconds, when the record was five point five seconds. I also got the long-jump record. It feels natural when I do these things. In basketball, I like to handle the ball and make the decisions. I can play the big people, because of my quickness. But I got to concentrate or the ball will go away from me. At basketball camp, I'm always the craziest guy—people always are walking around saying, 'Hey, who's that Dominican clown?' But on the court I don't do any fooling around. I got to show what I got.

"In life, I don't worry about myself. My brother will run defense for me. I got my family. Some kids here, I see them do drugs, messing around, wasting everything, and I see the druggies out on the street, and I just, I don't know, I don't understand it. That's not for me. I got a close family, and I got to think about my family, and if I can do something that will be good for my whole family, then I got to do it. I think about my country a lot—I want to go there so bad. In Santiago, everyone knows about me and wants to see me play now. If I'm successful, the way everyone talks about that, I'd like a big house there in Santiago, where I could go for a month or two each year and just relax."

AFTER practice, Felipe and I walked down 125th Street in a cold rain. First, he bought new headphones for his tape player from a Ghanaian street peddler, and then we stopped at Kentucky Fried Chicken to eat a pre-dinner dinner before heading home. He was dressed in his school clothes—a multicolored striped shirt, a purple-and-blue flowered tie, and pleated, topstitched baggy black cotton pants—and had on a Negro League baseball cap, which he was wearing sideways and at a jaunty angle. In his book bag were some new black Reebok pump basketball shoes; everyone on the team had been given a pair for the Baltimore tournament. Felipe was in a relaxed mood. He has travelled to and played in big tournaments so often that he now takes them in stride. He has become something of a tournament connoisseur. One of his favorite places in the world is southern France, where he played last spring with the Gauchos. He liked the weather and the countryside and the fact that by the end of the tour French villagers were crowding into the gyms and chanting his name. This particular evening, he was also feeling pleased that he had finished most of the homework he needed to do before leaving for Baltimore, which consisted of writing an essay for American history on Brown v. Board of Education and the Fifteenth Amendment, preparing an annotated periodic table of the elements, and writing two poems for his Spanish class.

One of his poems was called "Los Dientes de Mi Abuela," which translates as "The Teeth of My Grandmother." Sitting in Kentucky Fried Chicken, he read it to me: "'*Conservando la naturaleza se ve en aquella mesa los dientes de mi abuela, que los tenía guardados para Navidad.*'" He looked up from his notebook and gestured with a chicken wing. "This is about an old grandmother who is saving her special teeth for Christmas. In my country, it's funny, old people will go around without their teeth. So in the poem the grandmother is saving the teeth for Christmas, when she'll be eating a big dinner. The teeth are brilliant and shiny. Then she gets impatient and uses them to eat a turkey at Thanksgiving—'*GRRRT . . . suena la mordida de la abuela al pavo.*'" The other poem Felipe had written was about a man about to enter prison or some other gloomy passage in his life. It is called "La Primera y Última Vez . . ." As he began reading it, an argument broke out in front of the restaurant between a middle-aged woman in a cream-colored suit and two little boys who were there on their own. First, the boys were just sassy, and then they began yelling that the woman was a crack addict. She balled up a napkin and threw it at them, shouting, "Why don't you respect your elders? What are you doing out at night all alone? Why don't you get your asses home and watch television or read a fucking book?" Felipe kept reciting his poem, raising his voice over the commotion. When he finished, he said, "It's a sadder poem than the one about the grandmother. I like writing poems. In school, I like to write if it's in Spanish, and I like to draw, and I like math. I'm good at math. I like numbers. How do I write the poems? I don't know how. They just come to me."

Done with dinner, we went back out onto 125th Street and caught a cab up to

Felipe's apartment. The apartment was in a brick walkup, on a block with half a playground, a bodega, some unclaimed auto parts, and the depopulated stillness of urban decay. Walking up the four flights to the apartment, we passed an unchaperoned German shepherd napping in the vestibule, a stack of discarded Chinese menus, and someone's garbage, which had toppled over in a doorway. Felipe took the stairs three at a time. He used to dribble up and down the staircase until the neighbors complained that it was driving them crazy. For that reason and many others, the Lopezes were looking forward to moving as soon as they possibly could. Ironically, Felipe has been discouraged from playing in Puerto Rico this summer, on the ground that the basketball league there has a reputation for attracting prostitutes and drug use, when the fact is that spending the summer in Puerto Rico would help him get out of a neighborhood that attracts prostitutes and drug use.

One reason I decided to go home with Felipe was that I thought it might reveal something I hadn't yet seen in him—impatience or embarrassment at living a very humble life when he has been assured that such a rich and celebrated one is virtually in his grasp. That turned out to be not at all the case. In fact, Felipe loves to have people come over to his apartment. That night, he had invited Coach DeMello and his tutor, Maura Beattie, to drop by. When we arrived, they were already there. So were Mrs. Lopez; Felipe's brother Anderson, who moved to this country last year; Anderson's girlfriend, Nancy; Anthony; and Felipe's father. Felipe's sister, Sayonara, was expected as soon as she was through with a meeting at church. The Lopezes are an exceptionally good-looking and unusually large-scale family. Felipe's father, a construction laborer, is broad-chested, dignified, and well over six feet tall. His mother, Carmen, who works in the Garment District, is leggy and vigorous. She competed in track and volleyball as a girl in the Dominican Republic. That night, she was wearing a long flowered dress and black Reeboks. In the Dominican Republic, the Lopezes had a middle-class life. In this country, that life did not change so much as compress. All its hallmarks—Luis's exacting discipline, Carmen's piety, the children's sense of honor and obligation—came over intact, and then intensified in contrast to the disorder of the neighborhood they found themselves in.

The Lopez apartment was a warren of tiny dark rooms. One wall in the living room was covered with plaques Felipe had won—among them the *Parade* All-American High School Boys Award, the Five-Star Basketball Camp Most Promising Player, and the Ben Wilson Memorial Award for Most Valuable Player at ABCD Basketball Camp—and one corner of the room was filled by an old broken television set with what looked like a hundred basketball trophies on top. There was also a new television set, a videocassette recorder, a shelving unit, a huge sofa, a huge easy chair, a huge coffee table, some pretty folk-craft decorations from the Dominican Republic, some occasional tables, big billowy curtains, several floor lamps, and a life-size freestanding cardboard cutout of Michael Jordan. It was an exuberant-looking place. It was also possibly the most crowded place I'd ever been in. The television was tuned to a Spanish soap opera when we walked in, and Maura Beattie and Coach DeMello, were sitting beside it, ignoring the show and eating pizza. The Michael Jordan cutout was propped up behind DeMello, blocking the back door. Anderson and Nancy were squeezed together on the couch, looking at one of Felipe's scrapbooks, and Anthony was pacing around the room and talking to his father, who was reclined in the easy chair. Felipe said hello to his mother and they chatted for a minute in Spanish, and then she led him to a seat at the kitchen table and set a stockpot in front of him that was filled with chicken stew. There seemed to be a lot of people coming and going, and the conversation perked along:

DeMello: "I'll never forget when Anthony brought Felipe to Rice. He couldn't speak a word of English. I thought, How on earth is this kid going to take the entrance exams? Maura, do you remember that?"

Ms. Beattie: "I'm a math teacher. I'm not an English tutor. But I figured this would be something interesting to do. I didn't want the Lopezes to realize I wasn't really a tutor."

Anthony, walking through the kitchen: "Felipe, are you ready for tomorrow? You got your books with you? You planning to play?"

Nancy, translating for Carmen Lopez: "She says Felipe would rather play than eat. Otherwise, he don't give her no torment."

DeMello: "You should see the tape of the commercial Felipe and Robert Johnson did for Nintendo. They had a lot of fun, a lot of fun. Someone gave them bad advice, though, and it almost cost Felipe his eligibility. He turned down the money, and the commercial has to stop playing when he gets into college."

Ms. Beattie: "You want more pizza? Should we get more pizza? Felipe, would you eat more? He doesn't eat. I don't think he eats."

Nancy: "Would you look at this, all these trophies! Felipe, you got all these trophies?"

Anderson, to Nancy: "One of those is mine. Yeah, really. Nancy, look in the middle of the table and you'll find mine."

Anthony: "Everything everybody tells you is so beautiful—you know, be on TV, score thirty points, be the M.V.P., have the fame, all right—but you got to pay attention. There are a lot of rules. The N.C.A.A. rule is that no coaches can talk to him while he's a junior. They're willing, they're dying to talk to him, but that's not going to happen. When he's ready, we'll meet and talk and see. I had these dreams to be a great player, and I had my ankle broken, so it was all over for me. Felipe is my chance to see it happen for someone in my family, but it's going to happen the right way."

Felipe, coming in from the kitchen with Sayonara, just back from church: "Mommy, hey, Mommy, didn't I grow all these inches over here? One day, remember, I went to my closet and found these little pants and I said, 'Mommy, whose pants are these?' They were only this big—just little short pants—and she said, 'Felipe, those are your pants!' I couldn't believe it! I couldn't believe I ever wore those pants! I just looked at them and thought, Oh, my goodness."

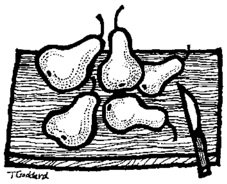
DeMello: "Hey, Felipe, are you ready for tomorrow? Because anyone who isn't ready with their homework done, Brother is going to hear about it, and we're not going to be going to any other tournaments. Are you ready?"

Felipe: "DeMello, I got one thing I got to do tomorrow. I got to type my essay."

Sayonara: "Felipe, I think you're better at basketball than at typing."

Nancy, translating for Carmen Lopez: "She says he has to do the essay. She says they're so proud of him, and with the help of God he'll go to the top, he'll be a great dunker. That's what she imagines for him in five years. For now, though, they don't soup him up. He has to do right. They still walk to Felipe—they're not running."

We drove to Baltimore the next night in a car rented by the tournament sponsors and a beat-up van used by the school. The tournament sponsors were also providing rooms for the whole team in a posh hotel downtown. The following day, after breakfast, the Raiders went for a pregame practice. The Baltimore Arena is big and windy, and it had a depressing effect on the team. They ran some bumbling fast-break drills and then had shooting practice for forty-five minutes, banging the balls against the rim. The clanking sound floated up and away into the empty stands. Coach DeMello called them together toward the end of practice. "I don't know where you guys are," he said. "I don't know where you are. You got to get your heads here by tonight. By. Tonight. This *team*, *this team* is going to give us something. They've got No. 53, he's a beef, he's six-five. Six. Five. And there's a fast point guard. He looks really young, he's probably a sophomore, but he does a hell of a job on help. They don't gamble. They get a lot of shots off. They help and recover." Pause. "Help and recover. Help and recover. And, Felipe, I saw you start to drop your head because you missed some shots. I don't want to see that. I want to see you lift your head and go on. All right, let's head out. I want everybody to relax and be dressed and in my room at 6 P.M., understand? Understand? O.K. O.K."



The arena is near Inner Harbor, a fancy shopping development in downtown Baltimore, so everybody walked over there to get some pizza and kill time. Twelve tall black boys, wearing bright yellow-and-green warmups, the pants hanging low and almost sliding off their hips, made for a sight that was probably not usual at Inner Harbor. Shoppers were executing pick-and-rolls to avoid them. In the mall, there were dozens of nice stores open, but the boys seemed reluctant to go into them. We ended up in a sporting-goods shop that specialized in clothes and accessories with college- and professional-team logos. Felipe disappeared down one of the rows. Kojo posted up in front of a rack of jackets, took two down, looked at the price tags, and then put them back. Reggie and Gerald found hats featuring their future colleges. "Yo, I like this one," Gerald said. "It's fly, but what I really want is a fitted Carolina hat. They only have the unfitted kind."

Reggie glanced at him and then said, "Why don't you wait till you get to Carolina, man? They going to have everything you want, man, just *wait*."

"I don't want to wait." Gerald put on an unfitted hat—the kind with an adjustable strap across the back—and flipped the brim back. Gary Saunders came over and looked at him. Gary is a sophomore. An air of peace or woe seems to form a bumper around him. Some people think he will eventually be as good as Felipe, or even better. He pulled Gerald's brim and then rocked back on his heels and said, sadly, "I wish I had a hat head. I can't wear a hat. I look dumb in a hat." Felipe walked by, wearing three hats, with each brim pointing in a different direction. He was smiling like a madman. He admired himself in the mirror and then took the hats off. "I've had enough," he said to no one in particular. "Now I'm going to my room."

Some things at the tournament did not bode well. For instance, the program listed the team as "Rice, Bronx, N.Y." instead of placing the school in Manhattan. Also, Jamal Livingston had decided to shave his head during the afternoon, and the razor broke after he had finished only one hemisphere. The resulting raggedy hairdo made him look like a crazy person. He was so unhappy about it that he told Coach DeMello he wouldn't play, but Science finally persuaded him, saying, "Stretch, you look cool, man. You're down with the heavy-metal crowd now." The Raiders got their first look at the Southern players as they warmed up. They were big kids, and they looked meaty, heavy-footed, and mean. Damon Cason, the point guard DeMello had warned the Raiders about, had powerful shoulders and a taut body and a merciless look on his face. Beside him, Felipe looked wispy and hipless. Warming up, he was silent and unsmiling. The fans were loud and found much to amuse them. When Jamal stepped onto the court, they began chanting "*Hair*cut! *Hair*cut! *Hair*cut!" and then switched to a chant of "Rice-A-Roni!" and then back to "*Hair*cut!" every time Jamal took a shot.

The game begins, and in the opening moments I focus only on Felipe. Rice wins the tap, but Southern scores nine quick points and looks ready to score more. Three Southern players are guarding Felipe. They struggle after him on the fast breaks, but he slips by and, still skimming along, makes a driving lay-up from the right. Then a fast-break lay-up, off a snappy pass from Ziggy. Then, thirty-two seconds later, a driving lay-up from the left side. The guards are looking flustered and clumsy. Felipe gets a rebound, passes to Reggie, gets the ball back, and then suddenly he drifts upward, over the court, over the other boys, toward the basket, legs scissored, wrists cocked, head tilted, and in that instant he looks totally serene. Right before he dunks the ball, I have the sensation that the arena is silent, but, of course, *it isn't*; it's just that as soon as he slams the ball down there is a crack of applause and laughter, which makes the instant preceding it seem, by contrast, like a vacuum of sound, a little quiet hole in space.

The final score is Rice 64, Southern 42. Leaving the floor, Felipe is greeted by some of the white men, who have come down to Baltimore to watch his game. One of them comments on how well he played and wants to know what he did all afternoon to prepare. Felipe is mopping his face with a towel. He folds it up and then says, "Oh, my goodness, I didn't do much of anything. I sat in my room and watched 'Popeye' on television and listened to merengue music. I just felt good today."

The last time I spent with the team was the night before they were to leave on a trip to two tournaments—the

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“Let’s face it, Joe Bob, bounty hunting isn’t what it used to be.”

• •

Iolani Classic, in Honolulu, and the Holiday Prep Classic, in Las Vegas. The flight to Hawaii was so early that Coach DeMello decided to have the boys sleep at the school. After practice, they spent a few hours doing homework and then ordered in pizzas. Reggie had brought a big radio from home and set it up under a crucifix on the second floor, tuned to a station playing corny soul ballads. Coach DeMello had set up a video player and lent the team his N.B.A.-highlight tapes. “You guys going to keep it together up here?” he said. “Let’s keep it together up here.”

One of them yelled out, “Hey, Coach, I got to ask you something. Are there any girls in Hawaii our age?”

Someone told Reggie to turn off the radio, because the music was awful.

Reggie said, “Bro, you bugging.”

“It’s stupid, man. Find something better.”

“Get your own radio, bro. Then you can be the d.j.”

“Reggie Freeman’s got a problem.”

“Hey, Gary, where’d you get that shirt?”

“Macy’s.”

“Macy’s! What, you rich or something?”

“Put on the tape. I want to see Bird and Magic play.”

“Bird’s a white guy.”

Gerald turned on the video player and put in the tape.

“Bird could be a purple guy, bro. He’s got a game.”

“Here’s Magic. This is the gospel, B, so you better listen up.”

They sat in rapt attention, replaying some of the better sections and reciting the play-by-play along with the announcer, Marv Albert. After a few minutes, I realized that Felipe wasn’t sitting with us, so I wandered down the hall, looking for him. Except for the vestibule where the boys were camping, the school was still and empty. I went upstairs to the gym. One window was broken, and a shaft of light from outside was shooting in. Someone’s jersey was looped over the back of a chair in the corner, and it flapped in the night breeze. I walked from one end of the court to the other. My footsteps sounded rubbery and loud on the hardwood. After a moment, I heard a grinding in the hallway, so I walked back across the court and out to the hall. The elevator door opened, and there was Felipe, his shirttail hanging down, his hat on backward, his hand on the controls.

“Were you looking for me?”

“I was.”

“I don’t want to hang with the guys.” He started to let the door slide shut, then pushed it open and leaned against it, grinning. “I just want to fool around. I don’t want anyone to find me. I know what I got to do when we get to Hawaii. I just want to go up and down tonight.”

Early the next morning, they left for Hawaii. They had a luau for Christmas, won three out of four games, flew to Las Vegas, ate too much casino food, again won three out of four games, and won a lot of quarters in the slot machines. The blustery, bright day they got back to New York, they celebrated Felipe Lopez’s eighteenth birthday.

THE rest of the season was a breeze until February, when Gil, Jamal, Kojo, and Rodney were taken off the team on account of bad grades. Still, going into the city Catholic-school championship, the Raiders had a record of nineteen and four. They then played St. Francis and won, 72–54, to get to the quarterfinals, and then beat Molloy, 46–36, to advance to the next round. On a cold night last week, they played Monsignor McClancy and lost in the last few minutes, 39–36, and so their season came to a close. The white men were following Felipe in every game. He had been playing so well and so steadily for the last few months that it now was as if some mystery had lifted off him and he was already inhabiting the next part of his life, in which he gets on with the business of making the most of his talent and polishing his game. In the meantime, the white men started taking note of a few young comers, like Gary Saunders, and also some skinny wisp of a kid at Alexander Burger Junior High. He’s only an eighth grader, but he already dunks. They think he’s worth watching. What they say is that he might be another Felipe someday. ♦

ARTIST'S SKETCHBOOK
BY GERALD SCARFE

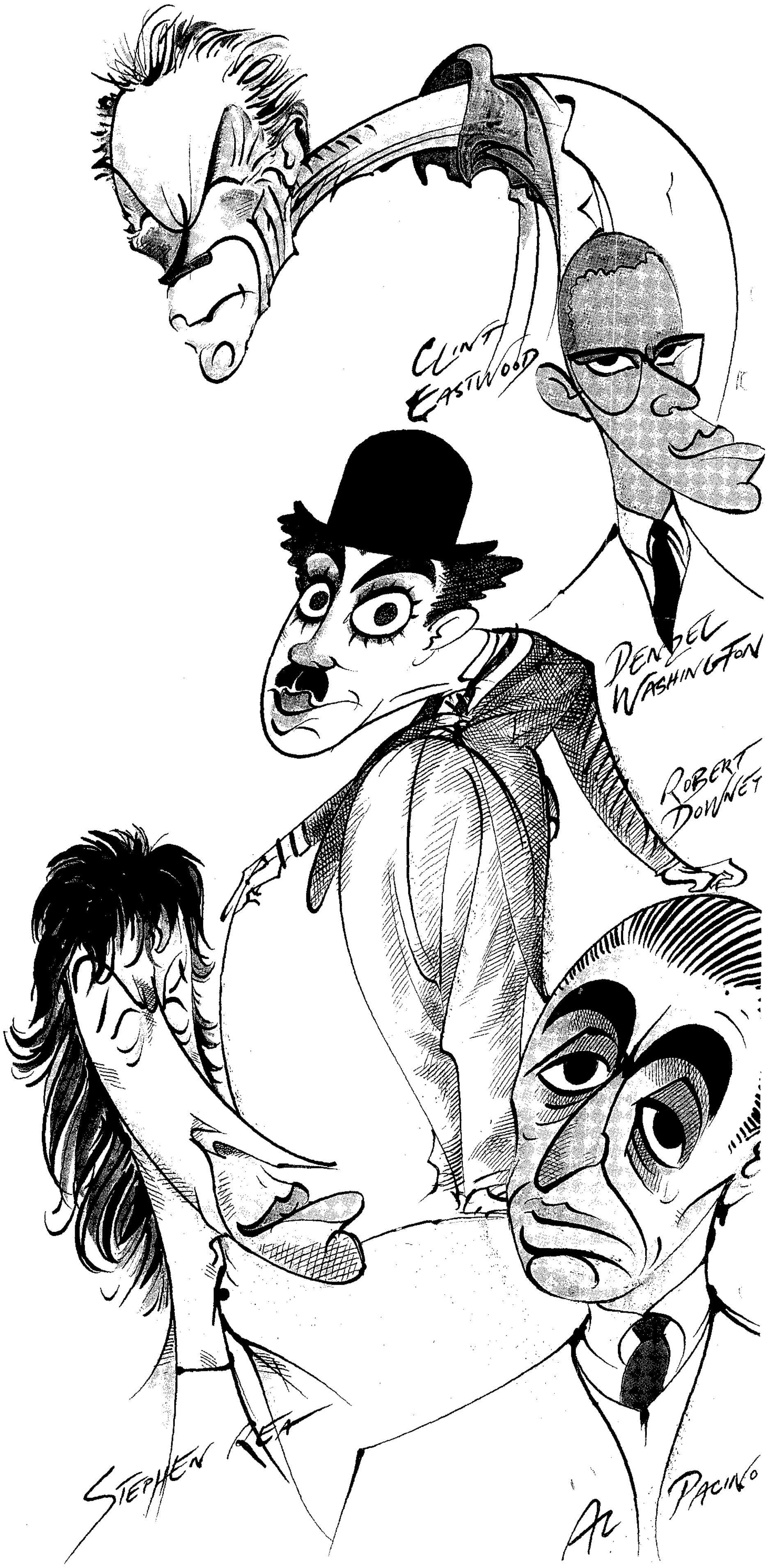
TO BE A NOMINEE

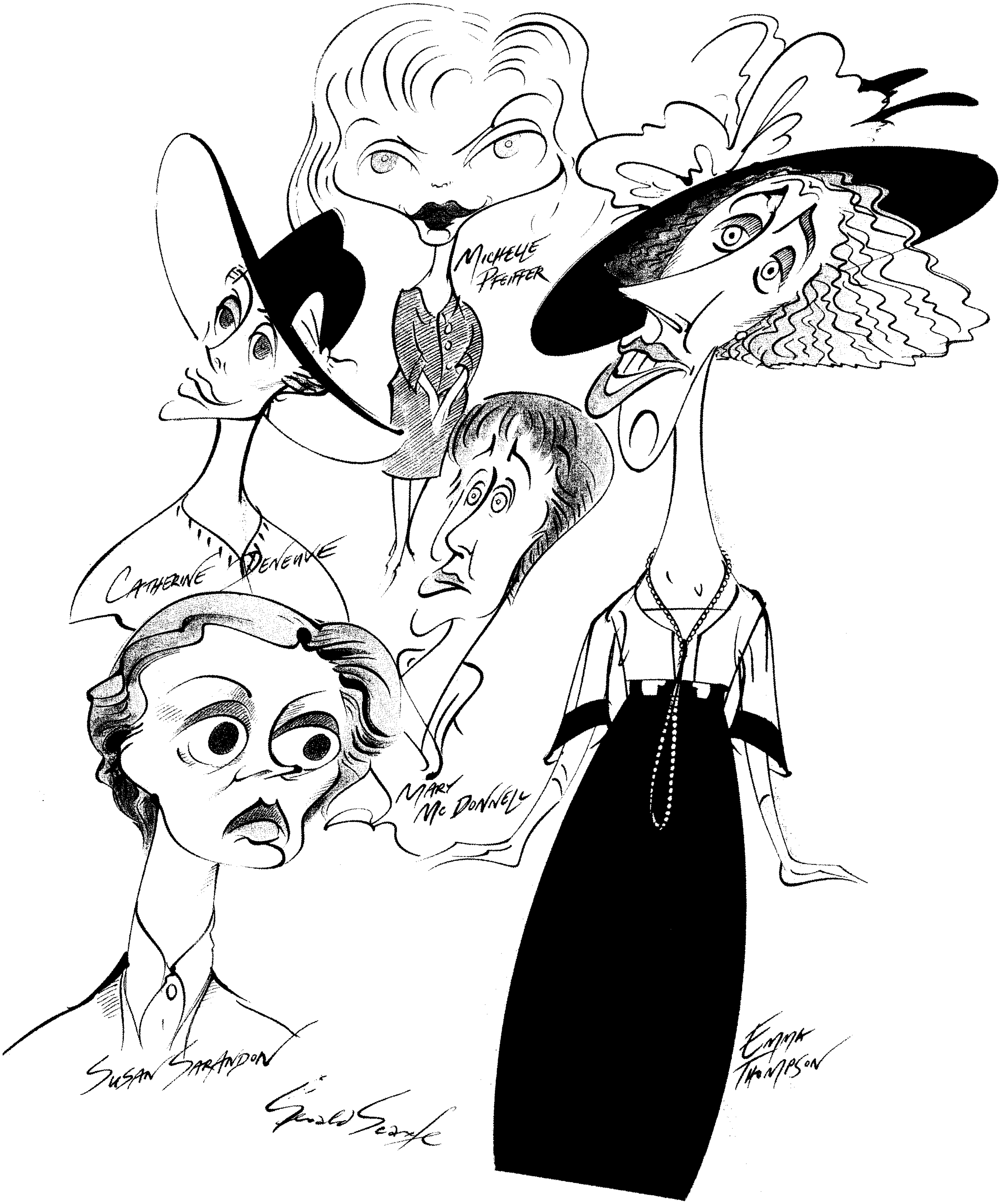
IT'S a full-time job that's offered to certain qualified actors every February and hardly ever turned down: Oscar nominee. The requirements are relatively simple. You spend the next two months or so grinning appreciatively; praising the other nominees; assuring interviewers that it doesn't really matter who wins, just being nominated is such an honor; deflecting credit from yourself to the director, the costumer, the makeup person, your agent; and confronting daily ads in the trade journals that offer up your face for the reader's "consideration," as if someone might wish to add a mustache or fix your nose.

If you're a dark horse, you bask, certain that when you begin your acceptance speech with the time-honored boilerplate—"Wow, I really wasn't expecting this"—you'll be believed. If you're running in the middle of the pack, you grow unexpectedly religious; there are no atheists at the Nominees Luncheon (held at the Beverly Hilton Hotel a couple of weeks before the ceremony). And if you are regarded as a shoo-in (Al Pacino, Emma Thompson) your life becomes a series of bizarre psychological rituals. You find yourself thinking that for perhaps the first time in its history the Academy has chosen well: have there ever been so many fabulous performances in a single year? You pray that when your big moment comes you'll remember whom to thank, because while the rest of the world is wincing at every fresh expression of gratitude all the people you've ever worked with are swearing vengeance if they don't hear their names. And you make invisible deals, vowing to give up smoking, to sacrifice on-the-set trysts with co-stars, to donate your screening room to the homeless, if only, just this once, the gods will let you win.

Then comes the ceremony (on March 29th this year), and the next day it's over. Olympian or also-ran, you are no longer an Oscar nominee, and you begin combing through scripts, searching for the role that will make the sages of the Academy want to hire you again next February, or the February after that.

—STEPHEN SCHIFF




Michelle Pfeiffer
Catherine Deneuve
Mary McDonnell
Susan Sarandon
Emma Thompson
Gerald Scarfe

FICTION

MARIA DOS PRAZERES

BY GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ

THE man from the undertaking establishment was so punctual that Maria dos Prazeres was still in her bathrobe, with her hair in curlers, and she just had time to put a red rose behind her ear to keep from looking as unattractive as she felt. She regretted her appearance even more when she opened the door and saw that he was not a mournful notary, as she supposed all death's merchants must be, but a timid young man wearing a checked jacket and a tie with birds in different colors. He had no overcoat, despite the unpredictable Barcelona spring and its oblique, wind-driven rain, which almost always made it less tolerable than the winter. Maria dos Prazeres, who had received so many men regardless of the hour, felt a rare embarrassment. She had just turned seventy-six and was convinced she would die before Christmas, but even so she was about to close the door and ask the funeral salesman to wait a moment while she dressed to receive him in the manner he deserved. Then it occurred to her that he would freeze on the dark landing, and she asked him in.

"Please excuse my awful appearance," she said, "but I've lived in Catalonia for over fifty years, and this is the first time anyone has ever come to an appointment on time."

She spoke perfect Catalan, with a somewhat archaic purity, although one could hear the music of her forgotten Portuguese. Despite her age and the metal curlers, she was still a slender, spirited mulatta, with wiry hair and pitiless yellow eyes, who had lost her compassion for men a long time ago. The salesman, half blinded by the light in the street, made no comment but wiped the soles of his shoes on the jute mat and kissed her hand with a bow.

"You're like the men in my day," said Maria dos Prazeres with a laugh sharp as hail. "Sit down."

Although he was new at the job, he knew enough about it not to expect this kind of festive welcome at eight o'clock in the morning, least of all from a merciless old lady who at first glance seemed a madwoman escaped from the Americas. And so he remained only a step away from the door, not knowing what to say, while Maria dos Prazeres pushed back the heavy plush drapes at the windows. The thin April light just reached the corners of the meticulous room, which looked more like an antique dealer's show window than a parlor. The objects in it were meant for daily use—there were not too many or too few—and each one seemed placed in its natural space with such sureness of taste that it would have been difficult to find a better-served house even in a city as old and secret as Barcelona.

"Excuse me," he said. "I've come to the wrong door."

"I wish that were true," she said, "but death makes no mistakes."

On the dining-room table the salesman spread open a diagram that had as many folds as a navigation chart, and sections in different colors with numerous crosses and figures in each color. Maria dos Prazeres saw that it was the complete plan of the immense cemetery of Montjuich, and she remembered with an ancient horror the graveyard in Manaus under the October rains, when tapirs splashed among nameless tombs and adventurers' mausoleums with Florentine stained-glass windows. One morning, when she was a very little girl, the Amazon in flood had become a sickening swamp, and in the courtyard of her house she had seen the broken coffins floating with pieces of rag and the hair of the dead coming through the cracks. That memory was the reason she had chosen the hill of Montjuich as her final resting place and not the small San Gervasio cemetery, so much closer and more familiar.

"I want a place that will never flood," she said.

"Well, here it is," said the salesman, indicating the spot on the map with a collapsible pointer that he carried in his pocket like a fountain pen. "No ocean in the world can come up this high."

She studied the colored panels until she found the main entrance and the three adjacent, identical, anonymous graves where Buenaventura Durruti, killed in the Civil War, and two other anarchist leaders lay buried. Every night someone wrote their names on the blank stones. Wrote them with pencil, with paint, with charcoal, with eyebrow pencil or nail polish, and every morning the guards wiped them clean so that no one would know who lay under which mute stone. Maria dos Prazeres had attended Durruti's funeral, the saddest and most tumultuous ever held in Barcelona, and she wanted to rest in a grave near his. But none was available, and she resigned herself to what was possible. "On the condition," she said, "that you don't decide to stack me in one of those five-year compartments as if it were the post office." Then, remembering the essential requirement, she concluded: "And, above all, I have to be buried lying down." For in response to the much publicized promotion of prepaid graves, a rumor was circulating that they were making vertical burials to save space. With the precision of someone who had memorized and repeated a speech many times, the salesman explained that the story was a wicked lie created by traditional undertaking establishments to discredit the unprecedented sale of graves on the installment plan. As he spoke, there were three discreet little taps at the door, and he paused with some uncertainty, but Maria dos Prazeres indicated that he should go on. "Don't worry," she said in a very quiet voice. "It's Noi."

The salesman took up where he had left off, and Maria dos Prazeres felt satisfied with his explanation. Still, before opening the door she wanted to make a final synthesis of a thought that had been ripening in her heart, down to its most intimate details, over the many years since the legendary flood in Manaus. "What I mean," she said, "is that I am looking for a place where I can lie down in the earth with no risk of floods and, if possible, in the shade of the trees in summer, and where I won't be pulled out after a certain period of time and thrown away in the trash."

She opened the front door and in walked a small dog drenched with rain, whose dissolute appearance had nothing to do with the rest of the house. He was returning from his morning walk through the neighborhood, and as he came in he suffered a sudden fit of tumultuous excitement. He jumped on the table, barking in a crazed way and almost ruining the map of the cemetery with his muddy paws. A single glance from his owner was enough to restrain his impetuosity. "Noi!" she said without raising her voice. "*Baixa d'aquí!*"

The animal shrank back, looked at her in consternation, and two bright tears rolled down his muzzle. Then Maria dos Prazeres turned her attention again to the salesman, and found him mystified.

"*Collons!*" he exclaimed. "He cried!"

"It's just that he's upset at finding someone here at this hour," Maria dos Prazeres apologized in a low voice. "In general, when he comes into the house he shows more care than men do. Except for you, as I've already seen."

"But he cried, damn it!" the salesman repeated, then realized his breach of good manners and begged her pardon with a blush. "Excuse me, but I've never seen anything like that, even in the movies."

"All dogs can do it if you train them," she said. "But instead the owners spend their whole lives teaching them habits that make them miserable, like eating from plates or doing their business on schedule and in the same place. And yet they don't teach them the natural things they enjoy, like laughing and crying. Where were we?"

They were almost finished. Maria dos Prazeres also had to resign herself to summers without trees, because the only ones in the cemetery had their shade reserved for dignitaries of the regime. On the other hand, the conditions and formulas in the contract were irrelevant, because she wanted to take advantage of the discount she would receive for paying cash in advance.

It was not until they had finished and the salesman was putting the papers back into his briefcase that he looked at the room with more observant eyes, and he shivered in the magic air of its beauty. He looked at Maria dos Prazeres again, as if for the first time.

"May I ask you an indiscreet question?" he said.

She walked with him toward the door.

"Of course," she said. "As long as it's not my age."

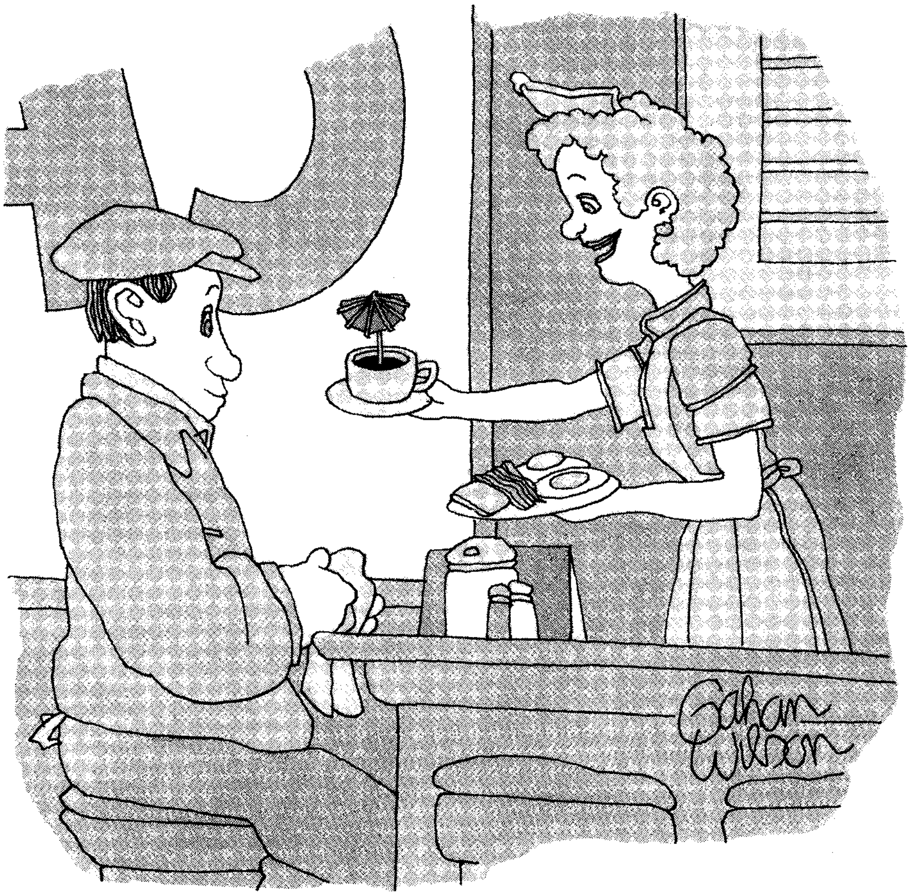
"I'm in the habit of guessing people's occupations from the things in their houses, and the truth is that here I can't tell," he said. "What do you do?"

Overcome with laughter, Maria dos Prazeres answered: "I'm a whore, my boy. Or don't I look like one anymore?"

The salesman turned red. "I'm sorry."

"I should be sorrier," she said, taking him by the arm to keep him from crashing into the door. "And be careful! Don't crack your skull before you've given me a proper burial."

As soon as she closed the door, she picked up the little dog and began to pet him, and with her beautiful African voice she joined in the children's songs that could be heard just then coming from the nursery school next door. Three months ago it had been revealed to her in a dream that she would die, and from that time on she had felt closer than ever to this child of her solitude. She had anticipated the posthumous distribution of her belongings and the disposition of her body with so much care that she could have died at that moment without inconveniencing anyone. She had retired of her own volition, with a fortune she had accumulated stone by stone but without too many bitter sacrifices, and she had chosen as her final home the very ancient and noble town of Gracia, which had already been swallowed up by the expanding city. She had bought the dilapidated second-floor apartment, with its perpetual smell of smoked herring and its walls eaten away by saltpeter but still showing all the bullet holes of some inglorious battle. There was no porter, and even though all the apartments were occupied, some steps were missing on the damp, dark stairways. Maria dos Prazeres had the bathroom and kitchen remodelled, covered the walls with bright fabrics, put bevelled glass in the windows, and hung velvet drapes. Then she brought in the exquisite furnishings—the useful and decorative objects and the chests of silks and brocades, which the Fascists had



"We think it sort of brightens up the breakfast."

No. 22
The J. Peterman
Owner's Manual.
(Spring 1993)

P. 4
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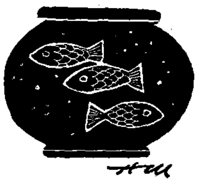
stolen from residences abandoned by the Republicans in the stampede of defeat, and which for many years she had been buying one by one for bargain prices at secret auctions. The only remaining link to her past was her friendship with the Count of Cardona, who continued visiting her on the last Friday of every month to have supper with her and make languid, after-dinner love. But even that friendship from her youth was kept hidden, for the Count parked the automobile that bore his coat of arms at a more than discreet distance, and he walked to her second floor in the shadows, as much to protect her honor as his own. Maria dos Prazeres knew no one in the building except the people in the apartment opposite hers, where a very young couple with a nine-year-old daughter had moved in not long ago. It seemed incredible to her, but in fact she had never met anyone else on the stairs.

And yet the distribution of her legacy revealed that she was more rooted than she had supposed in that community of unreconstructed Catalonians whose national honor was founded on the virtue of decent modesty. She had left even the most insignificant trinkets to the people closest to her heart, who were the people closest to her house. When it was over she did not feel very convinced that she had been fair, but she was certain she had not forgotten anyone who did not deserve it. She had prepared the bequests with so much rigor that the notary on the Calle del Árbol, who flattered himself on having seen everything, could not believe his eyes when he saw her dictating to his clerks from memory, in medieval Catalan, the detailed list of her possessions, along with the exact name of each item, and the complete list of beneficiaries with their professions and addresses and the place each held in her heart.



After the visit of the funeral salesman, she became one of the countless Sunday visitors to the cemetery. Like her graveyard neighbors, she planted year-round flowers in the urns, watered the new grass and trimmed it with pruning shears until it resembled the carpets in the mayor's office, and became so familiar with the spot that in the end she could not understand why it had seemed so desolate to her in the beginning.

On her first visit, her heart had skipped a beat when she saw the three nameless graves near the gate, but she did not even stop to look at them, because the vigilant watchman was a few steps away from her. But on the third Sunday she took advantage of a moment's carelessness to fulfill one of her great dreams, and with her lipstick she wrote on the first, rain-washed stone: "Durruti." From then on, whenever she could she did it again, sometimes on one gravestone, or on two or on all three, and always with a firm pulse and a heart stirred by nostalgia.

One Sunday, in late September, she witnessed her first burial on the hill. Three weeks later, on a cold, windy afternoon, they buried a young bride in the grave next to hers. By the end of the year, seven plots were occupied, but the short-lived winter passed with no ill effects on Maria dos Prazeres. She suffered no indisposition, and as the weather grew warmer and the torrential sound of life poured in through the open windows, she felt more determined to survive the enigmas of her dreams. On his return, the Count of Cardona, who spent the hottest months in the mountains, found her even more attractive than she had been in the uncommon youthfulness of her fiftieth year.

After many frustrated attempts, Maria dos Prazeres succeeded in having Noi pick out her grave on the massive hill of identical graves. Then she devoted herself to teaching him to cry over the empty tomb so that he would be in the habit of doing so after her death. She walked with him several times from her house to the cemetery, pointing out landmarks to help him memorize the Ramblas bus route, until she felt that he was skilled enough to be sent on his own.

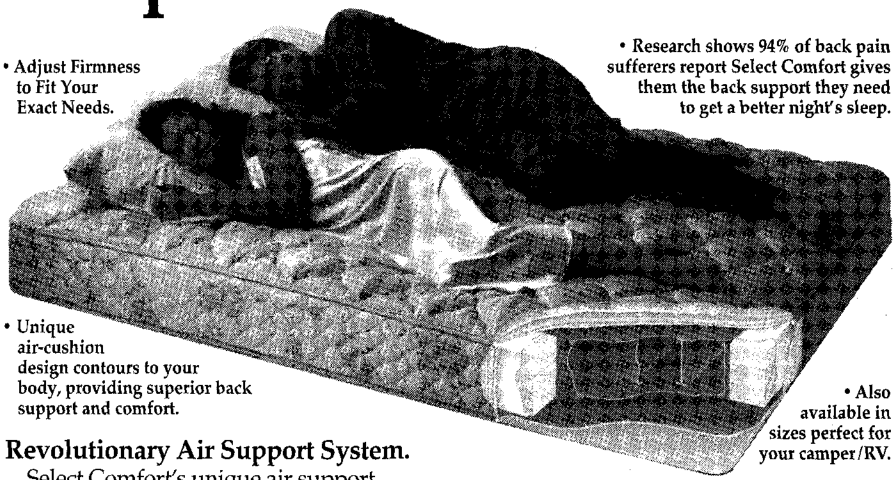
On the Sunday of the final test, at three o'clock in the afternoon, she took off his spring vest, in part because summer was in the air and in part to make him less conspicuous, and turned him loose. She saw him go down the shady side of the street at a quick trot, his little rump tight and sad beneath his jubilant tail, and it was all she could do not to cry—for herself, for him, for so many and such bitter years of shared illusions—until she saw him turn the corner at Calle Mayor and head for the sea. Fifteen minutes later she took the Ramblas bus at the nearby Plaza de Lesseps, trying to see him through the window without being seen, and in fact she did see him, distant and serious among the Sunday flocks of children, waiting for the traffic light to change at Paseo de Gracia.

"My God," she sighed. "He looks so alone."

She had to wait for him for almost two hours under the brutal Montjuich sun. She greeted several of the bereaved from other, less memorable Sundays, although she almost did not recognize them, because so much time had gone by since she had first seen them that they no longer wore mourning or cried, and they put flowers on the graves without thinking about their dead. A short while later, when they had all left, she heard a mournful bellow that startled the seagulls, and on the immense sea she saw a white ocean liner flying the Brazilian flag, and with all her heart she wished that it were bringing her a letter from someone who would have died for her in Pernambuco prison. A little after five o'clock, twelve minutes ahead of schedule, Noi appeared on the hill, slavering with fatigue and the heat, but with the air of a triumphant child. At that moment Maria dos Prazeres overcame the terror of not having anyone to cry at her grave.

The following autumn was when she began to detect ominous signs that she could not decipher but that made her heart heavier. She drank coffee again under the golden acacias on the Plaza del Reloj, wearing her coat with the foxtail collar and the hat decorated with artificial flowers, which was so old it had become fashionable again. Her intuition grew more acute. Trying to understand her own disquiet, she scrutinized the chatter of the women selling birds on the Ramblas, the gossip of the men at the bookstalls—who for the first time in many years were not talking about soccer—the deep silences of the crippled war veterans tossing bread crumbs to the pigeons, and everywhere she found unmistakable signs of death. At Christmas, colored lights were strung between the acacias, and music and happy voices were heard from the balconies, and a crowd of tourists invaded the sidewalk cafés, but in the midst of all the festivities one could feel the same repressed tension that preceded the days when the anarchists had taken over the streets. Maria dos Prazeres, who had lived through

Sleep Better On An Airbed



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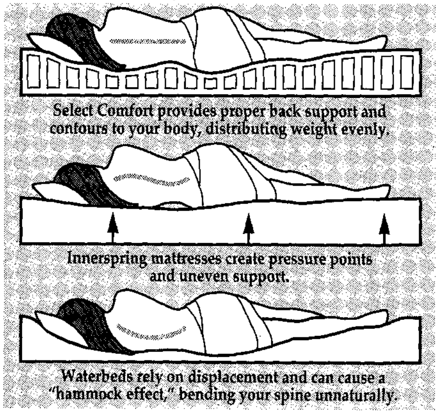

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that time of great passions, could not control her uneasiness, and for the first time she was awakened from her sleep by the clawing of fear. One night, outside her window, state security agents shot and killed a student who had scrawled on the wall: "*Visca Catalunya lliure.*"

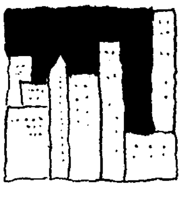
"My God," she said to herself in terror, "it's as if everything were dying with me!"

She had only known this kind of disquiet when she was a very little girl in Manaus, at the moment before dawn, when the innumerable sounds of night stopped all at once, the waters paused, time hesitated, and the Amazon jungle sank into an abysmal silence that was like the silence of death. In the midst of that irresistible tension, on the last Friday of April, as always, the Count of Cardona came to her house for supper.

The visit had turned into a ritual. The punctual Count would arrive between seven and nine at night with a bottle of local champagne, wrapped in the afternoon paper to make it less noticeable, and a box of filled truffles. Maria dos Prazeres prepared cannelloni au gratin and a young chicken au jus—the favorite dishes from the halcyon days of fine old Catalonian families—and a bowl filled with fruits of the season. While she cooked, the Count listened to selections from historic performances of Italian operas on the phonograph, taking slow sips from a glass of port that lasted until the records were over.

After the unhurried supper and conversation, they made sedentary love from memory, which left both of them with a taste of disaster. Before he left, always restless at the approach of midnight, the Count put twenty-five pesetas under the ashtray in the bedroom. That was Maria dos Prazeres' price when he first met her in a transient hotel on the Paralelo, and it was all that the rust of time had left intact.

Neither of them had ever wondered what their friendship was based on. Maria dos Prazeres owed him some simple favors. He gave her helpful advice on managing her savings; he had taught her to recognize the true value of her relics, and how to keep them so that no one would discover they were stolen goods. But above all he was the one who showed her the road to a decent old age in the Gracia district, when they said in the brothel where she had spent her life that she was too old for modern tastes, and wanted to send her to a house for retired ladies of the night who taught boys how to make love for a fee of five pesetas. She had told the Count that her mother sold her in the port of Manaus when she was fourteen years old, and that the first mate of a Turkish ship used her without mercy during the Atlantic crossing, and then abandoned her, with no money, no language, and no name, in the light-filled swamp of the Paralelo. They were both conscious of having so little in common that they never felt more alone than when they were together, but neither one had dared to spoil the pleasures of habit. It took a national upheaval for them to realize, both at the same time, how much they had hated each other, and with how much tenderness, for so many years.



It was a sudden conflagration. The Count of Cardona was listening to the love duet from "La Bohème," sung by Licia Albanese and Beniamino Gigli, when he happened to hear a news bulletin on the radio that Maria dos Prazeres was listening to in the kitchen. He tiptoed over and listened as well. General Francisco Franco, eternal dictator of Spain, had assumed responsibility for deciding the fate of three Basque separatists who had just been condemned to death. The Count breathed a sigh of relief.

"Then they'll be shot without fail," he said, "because the Caudillo is a just man."

Maria dos Prazeres stared at him with the burning eyes of a royal cobra and saw the passionless pupils behind gold-rimmed spectacles, the ravening teeth, the hybrid hands of an animal accustomed to dampness and dark. Saw him just as he was.

"Well, you'd better pray he doesn't," she said, "because if they shoot even one of them I'll poison your soup."

The Count was flabbergasted. "Why would you do that?"

"Because I'm a just whore, too."

The Count of Cardona never returned, and Maria dos Prazeres was certain that the final cycle of her life had just come to an end. Until a little while before, in fact, she had felt indignant when anyone offered her a seat on the bus, or tried to help her across the street or take her arm to go up stairs, but she came not only to allow such things but

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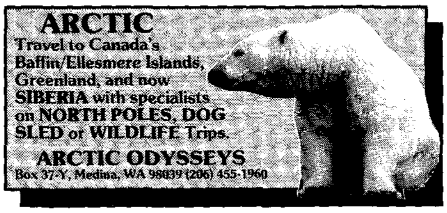

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even to desire them as a hateful necessity. That was when she ordered an anarchist's tombstone, with no name or dates, and began to sleep with the door unlocked so that Noi could get out with the news if she died in her sleep.

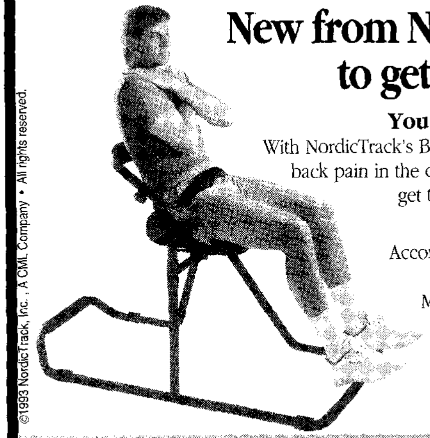
ONE Sunday, as she was coming home from the cemetery, she met the little girl from the apartment across the landing. She walked with her for several blocks, talking about everything with a grandmother's innocence while she watched her and Noi playing like old friends. On the Plaza del Diamante, just as she had planned, she offered to buy her ice cream. "Do you like dogs?" she asked.

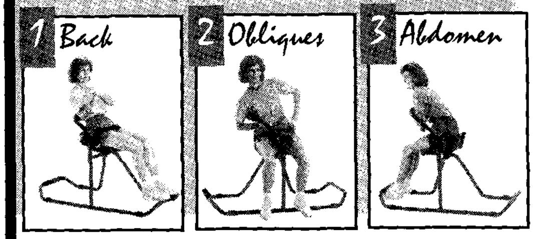
"I love them," said the girl.

Then Maria dos Prazeres made the proposal that she had been preparing for so long. "If anything ever happens to me, I want you to take Noi," she said. "On the condition that you let him loose on Sundays and not think any more about it. He'll know what to do."

The girl was delighted. And Maria dos Prazeres returned home with the joy of having lived a dream that had ripened for years in her heart. But it was not because of the weariness of old age or the belated arrival of death that the dream was not realized. It was not even her decision. Life made it for her one icy November afternoon when a sudden storm broke as she was leaving the cemetery. She had written the names on the three tombstones and was walking down to the bus station when the downpour soaked her to the skin. She just had time to take shelter in a doorway of a deserted district that seemed to belong to another city, with dilapidated warehouses and dusty factories, and enormous trailer trucks that made the awful noise of the storm even more frightening. As she tried to warm the drenched dog with her body, Maria dos Prazeres saw the crowded buses pass by, she saw empty taxis pass by with their flags up, but no one paid attention to her distress signals. Then, when even a miracle seemed impossible, a sumptuous, almost noiseless car the color of dusky steel passed by along the flooded street, made a sudden stop at the corner, and came back in reverse to where she stood. The windows lowered as if by magic, and the driver offered her a lift.

"I'm going quite a distance," said Maria dos Prazeres with sincerity. "But





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you would do me a great favor if you could take me part of the way."

"Tell me where you're going," he insisted.

"To Gracia," she said.

The door opened without his touching it.

"It's on my way," he said. "Get in."

The interior smelled of refrigerated medicine, and once she was inside the rain became an unreal mishap, the city changed color, and she felt she was in a strange, happy world where everything was arranged ahead of time. The driver made his way through the disorder of the traffic with a fluidity that had a touch of magic. Maria dos Prazeres felt intimidated not only by her own misery but by that of the pitiful little dog asleep in her lap.

"This is an ocean liner," she said, because she felt she had to say something appropriate. "I've never seen anything like it, not even in my dreams."

"Really, the only thing wrong with it is that it doesn't belong to me," he said in an awkward Catalan, and after a pause he added in Castilian, "What I earn in a lifetime wouldn't be enough to buy it."

"I can imagine," she sighed.

Out of the corner of her eye she examined him in the green light of the dashboard, and she saw that he was little more than an adolescent, with short curly hair and the profile of a Roman bronze. She thought that he was not handsome but had a distinctive kind of charm, that his worn, cheap leather jacket was very becoming, and that his mother must feel very happy when she heard him walk in the door. Only his laborer's hands made it possible to believe that he was not the owner of the car.

They did not speak again for the rest of the trip, but Maria dos Prazeres also sensed that he examined her several times out of the corner of his eye, and once again she regretted still being alive at her age. She felt ugly and pitiful, with the housemaid's shawl she had thrown over her head when the rain began, and the deplorable autumn coat she had not thought to change, because she was thinking about death.

When they reached the Gracia district it was beginning to clear, night had fallen, and the street lights were on. Maria dos Prazeres told the driver to let her off at a nearby corner, but he insisted on taking her to her front door, and he not only did that but pulled up on the

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sidewalk so that she could get out of the car without getting wet. She released the dog, attempted to climb out with as much dignity as her body would allow, and when she turned to thank him she met a male stare that took her breath away. She endured it for a moment, not understanding very well who was waiting for what, or from whom, and then he asked in a determined voice: "Shall I come up?"

Maria dos Prazeres felt humiliated. "I am very grateful for your kindness in bringing me here," she said, "but I will not permit you to make fun of me."

"I have no reason to make fun of anybody," he said with absolute seriousness, in Castilian. "Least of all a woman like you."

Maria dos Prazeres had known many men like him, had saved many men bolder than he from suicide, but never in her long life had she been so afraid to make up her mind. She heard him repeat without the slightest change in his voice: "Shall I come up?"

She walked away without closing the car door, and answered in Castilian to be sure he understood her. "Do whatever you want."

She walked into the lobby, dim in the oblique light from the street, and began to climb the first flight of stairs with trembling knees, choked by a fear she would have thought possible only at the moment of death. When she stopped outside the door on the second floor, shaking with desperation to find her keys in her bag, she heard two car doors slam, one after the other, in the street. Noi, who had preceded her, tried to bark. "Be quiet," she ordered in an agonized whisper. Then she heard the first steps on the loose risers of the stairway and was afraid her heart would burst. In a fraction of a second she made a thorough reëxamination of the premonitory dream that had changed her life for the past three years, and she saw the error of her interpretation.

"My God," she said to herself in astonishment. "So it wasn't death!"

At last she found the lock, listening to the measured footsteps in the dark, listening to the heightened breathing of someone who approached in the dark with as much astonishment as she felt, and then she knew it had been worth waiting so many years, worth so much suffering in the dark, if only to live that moment. ♦

(Translated, from the Spanish, by Edith Grossman.)

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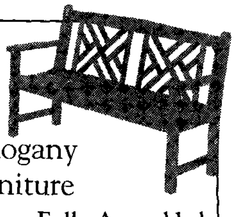

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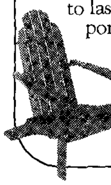

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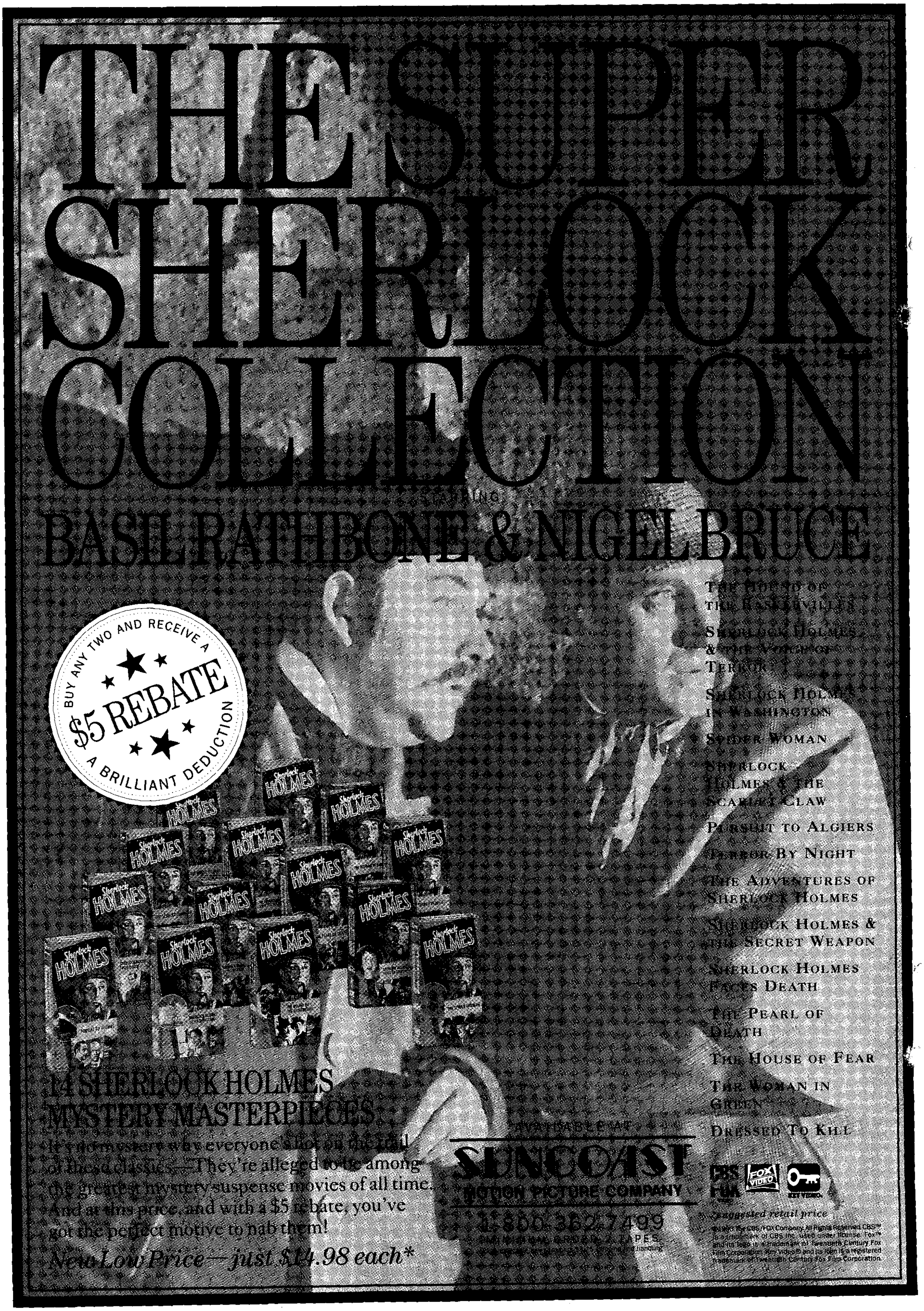

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THE CRITICS

THE ART WORLD

OUT OF AFRICA

BY ADAM GOPNIK

BY far the loveliest exhibition in New York right now is on view at the newly relocated Museum for African Art, under the unlovely title "Secrecy: African Art That Conceals and Reveals." Loveliness is not a quality most of us associate with African objects, but the design of the new museum, and of this purposefully exemplary show, reaches toward it—in part through the necessities of art-world politics—and succeeds.

The Museum for African Art first opened in 1984, as the Center for African Art, at Sixty-eighth and Madison, under the direction of the art historian Susan Vogel, who had been one of the organizers of the Metropolitan's Rockefeller Wing. It came into being at the time of the last great hoo-ha about African objects, occasioned both by the opening of the Rockefeller Wing and by the MOMA "Primitivism" exhibition. Intended to ride in the wake of both events, it ended up being a little swamped by them instead. The art world had said all that it had to say about the subject, and for most of the last decade the museum existed discreetly, not to say forlornly, up on the Upper East Side; its shows, though often full of terrific stuff, had a slightly placid, fifties feeling, recalling the time when every Park Avenue psychoanalyst had a small Tsogo mask in his office to go along with the Ben Shahn prints.

Last year, the museum's directors decided to move downtown, and they found a space on lower Broadway, just north of the downtown Guggenheim. Maya Lin, of Vietnam Veterans Memorial fame, was brought in to do the renovation; a young scholar named Mary H. Nooter was asked to organize the first show, and the designer Maureen Healy to install it. Their solution for the new space, on the ground and basement floors of an old building at 593 Broadway, is not, strictly speaking, architectural at all. It's like set design—it depends on dramatic lighting and, above all, on color. Lin has designed a staircase at each end of the space to connect the two floors; the curving stairway at the near end is painted a vibrant sunshine yellow, the other an evening violet. The floors of the galleries have been stained a dark, rain-forest green, and a high-ceilinged room at the museum entrance has had its walls covered with a beautiful deep-indigo fabric from the Côte d'Ivoire decorated (departing from traditional practice) with an irregular pattern of white points, so that it looks like an improvised planetarium. This antipuritanical display of color, in place of the white walls of a modern museum or the greenish neutral backgrounds of an anthropological one, suggests in itself a new appreciation of the objects the museum contains: moody and evocative, even rhapsodic, instead of detached and point-scoring. Even the intense spotlighting that illuminates the objects, picking out the patinaed or scarified surfaces of the masks against the dark surroundings, gives the works in the show a far less earthbound quality than you usually associate with African objects.

This is, in part, a political solution—or, at least, a depoliticizing one—to the formidable problems that confront anybody trying to put traditional (I almost wrote "tribal") African art in a museum these days. Exhibition-making in New York is politicized right now, and putting on an exhibition of African art may be the most highly politicized act of all. There's a lot that you just can't say. You can't talk about the objects in formal terms, because that takes them out of their rightful place as ritual objects; on the other hand, if you talk about them as ritual objects you deprive them of their rightful place as sophisticated works of art. What Vogel and Nooter have done is, in effect, not to talk about the objects.

A Zairian nail figure of a two-headed dog, on view at the new Museum for African Art.

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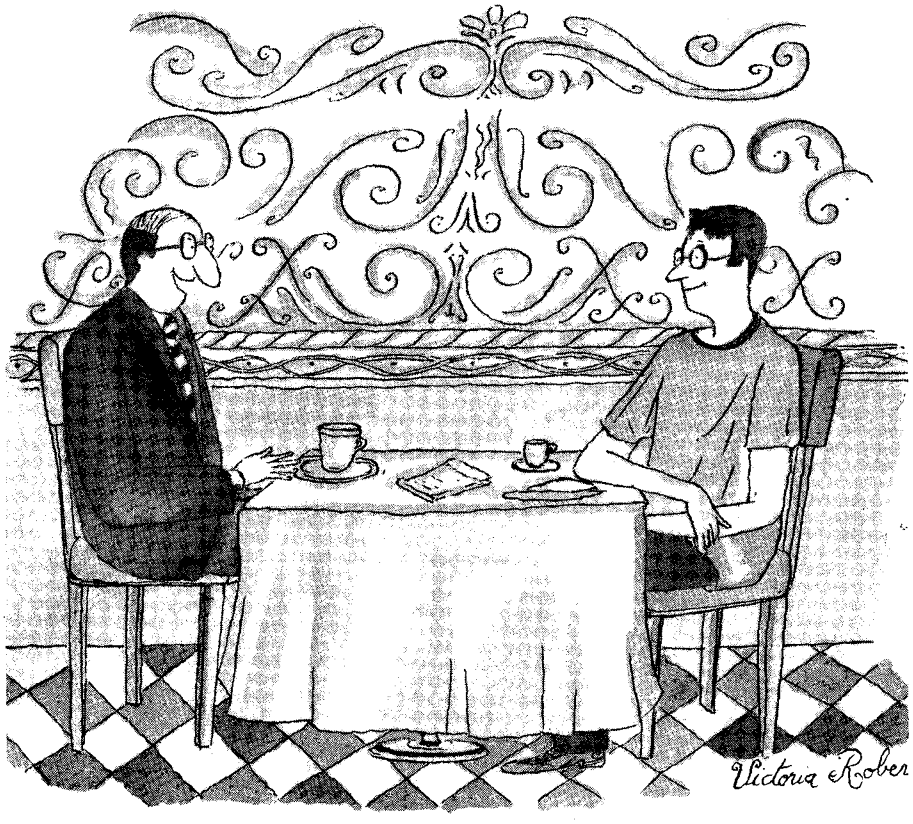
Their theme of "Secrecy," though it has a solid scholarly basis, also casts a new and useful veil of discretion over African art—one of distanced, slightly respectful mystery, instead of reductive modernist formalism or old-style anthropological condescension. Instead of emphasizing either form or ritual, they want to emphasize form *as* ritual—the way the formal inventiveness of the masks and altars and fetishes is artful because it embodies a series of world views.

There are about a hundred works in the show: masks, figures, textiles, and architectural pieces—all traditional, and all sub-Saharan. The announced intention of the exhibition is to "show how certain works of art serve to protect and maintain secret knowledge," and the visitors' pamphlet goes on, "The exhibition explores secrecy cross-culturally within Africa as an aesthetic and political strategy, as a social and spiritual boundary marker, and as a form of property and power." The emphasis in "Secrecy," the curators say, "is not on the content of secrets, but rather on the form they take, and the boundaries they set between genders, classes, age groups and professions." Anyone who is familiar with current art jargon will recognize the vocabulary, and, for every chewy fact the catalogue provides, it includes some boilerplate. The obvious point that our knowledge of tribal cultures is limited becomes "It is only by rhetorical resort to synecdoche, the figure of speech in which the part stands in for the whole, that scraps of captured secret can be taken to represent the entire culture of the Other and the multiple subjectivities that constitute it." The unintended joke is that the new critical consciousness is an even more dutiful reflection of parochial concerns than the old one was. Where we were once instructed to see nothing but plastic intensity and significant form, the new "reading" sees the African peoples exploring issues of identity and gender, subverting hierarchical notions of self, creating environmental installations, etc. Apollinaire saw Picasso; we see Eva Hesse. But the objects themselves are richer than any jargon; they're endlessly beautiful to look at, of amazingly high quality throughout, and limitlessly thought-provoking.

The show begins, in a kind of demonstration piece, with a display of Songye masks. With their heavy-lidded eyes and pursed lips, these are the African masks that look like Mick Jagger half asleep—a shelf of protruding lips, eyes treated as square bulges rather than



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as recesses, the whole covered with a pattern of striations that seem to suggest at once scarification and early Frank Stella. Putting the Songye masks into a "revisionist" show is a much more aggressive gesture than might at first be apparent, since it is the Songye masks that originally seemed—in their abstraction, their simplification of faces to a reductive geometric sign language—to sum up the formalist view of why African art mattered so much. But they are also meant to be interpreted as cosmologies (the nostrils are "the opening of a furnace," the eyes "the swellings of sorcerers," and so on) and to be read like books—slowly taken in, rather than absorbed in a moment of aesthetic shock.

If art has any one purpose in these media-saturated days, it is to make us look more slowly, and a kind of slowed-down observation is what this show offers. What is "secret" about some of the objects is occasionally unclear. A Lulua figure, for instance, though it turns out to have little reservoirs into which special ingredients could be poured, isn't really secret at all: it looks like a warrior, and it *is* a warrior. Other objects, though, are beautifully uncommunicative, deliberately obscure. A four-legged, featureless, balloonlike sculpture of an animal—at once adorable and sinister—from the Bamana people of Mali turns out to derive from a tribal fraternity and also, shockingly, to be a sacrificial altar, covered with what the label delicately calls "dried organic matter." The mysteriousness of the piece—its featurelessness—is apparently part of a self-consciously romantic aesthetic held by the Komo elders, for whom the key aesthetic term is *dibi*, which means "obscurity." The piece is a kind of sublime stuffed animal—Barney with blood lust.

Other pieces in the show are anthropological marvels. There is, for instance, a memory board from the Luba people, in Zaire—a pegboard in the form of a tortoise, on which multicolored pieces can be placed to encode genealogical knowledge. Still others are richly emotional. A simple Vuvi mask from Gabon, for instance, is not particularly inventive as sculpture—it's just a white shield with features laid on it—but it becomes a representation of anxiety as powerful as a Hellenistic bust. Its fea-

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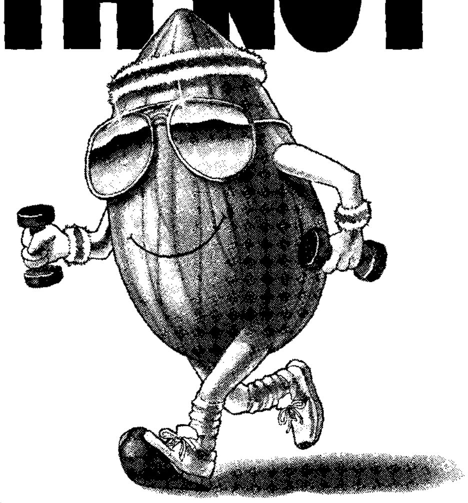

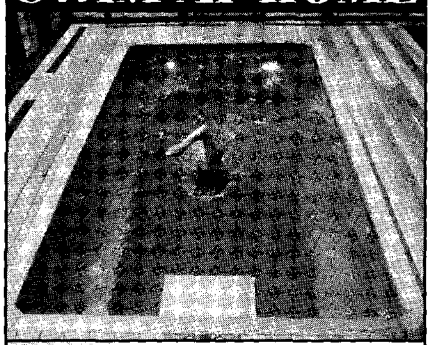

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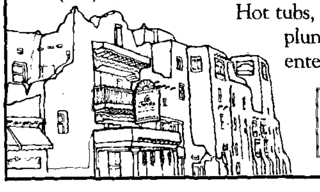

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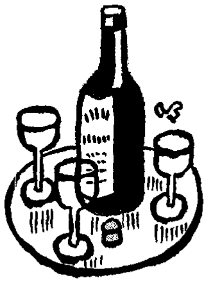
tures are reduced to two simple shapes—wedges and bean-shaped ovals. Its open, expectant mouth and eyes are made from the bean shape, the high classical nose from the wedge, while a second wedge serves as both eyebrows and expression lines—a visor of doubt superintending a universal face.

The masterpieces of the show are two *nkisi* from Zaire. One, a male figure, has mirrors for eyes, and its arm is raised in intimidation; hundreds of nails have been driven into the body, at every imaginable angle, until they form a hide—a coat—of iron spikes. The other figure, a two-headed dog, snarls at both ends: Cave canem. I have lived my entire life in fear of *nkisi* like this. (There used to be one at a museum I frequented as a child, set at the end of a long, long corridor; I tiptoed past it with my eyes shut.) Now, having read the catalogue, I understand that the *nkisi* are, in fact, meant to be just as scary as they look. And yet they have their benevolent aspect, too. The nails are driven into them in order to activate medicines secreted inside hidden cavities in the figure, and the mirrors are meant to deflect evil. There are imaginary creatures that are scary because they seem to annihilate the possibility of a moral universe (Jason in the "Friday the Thirteenth" movies, for instance), and then there are imaginary creatures (the Wicked Witch of the West; Freddy Krueger) that are scary because they seem to define so well the nature of fear—and in defining it they circumscribe it, make it knowable and coherent and controllable.



The show ends with a series of objects from the Dogon people of Mali—"classical" African objects, which have been known to Westerners longer, perhaps, than any other kind of African art. There is a moralizing purpose here: what we understand about Dogon art—its purposes, its rituals—has changed a lot over the century, so that we are now less certain about its meaning than we were fifty years ago. "Can we ever really understand another culture's secrets?" the wall label asks, a little disingenuously. That the more you know about something the less certainly you "understand" it, though, is not a fact about the incommensurability of cultures; it's a fact about understanding. Think of any common object in our own culture—the telephone, for instance. What the telephone does is, at first, easy enough to describe. But its uses—its roles as a medium for courtship, as a bearer of erotic secrets, as a centerpiece of business rituals—are endlessly complicated, and expand and alter all the time. The trouble with the old museum wall labels wasn't that they told you more than anyone really knew about Dogon culture but that they tried to tell you more than the Dogon knew themselves.

Telephones, of course—with the possible exception of that strange phone from the sixties which stood up straight and bent its head, like a Brancusi seal—do not declare their complexities when you look at them. There are several objects in the "Secrecy" show that are simply exotic telephones; their unfamiliarity makes us read more into them than is there. But some things do manage to look mysterious even after all their ostensible secrets are known, and when they do we call them art. Mary Nooter struggles to make the right point, but she does make it: the secrets in African art are mostly open, and pretty much open-ended. She writes, "The assignation of fixed meanings and interpretations is only tangential to the real essence and purpose of the secret which resides in its own signification." If there's any point in talking about "art" as a category that crosses cultures—and anyone who works in a museum ought to think there is, or get into some other line of work—it is to describe the secrets that every culture has and that somehow manage to keep themselves.

It's probably unfair to use art as rich and sophisticated and "achieved" as this to beat contemporary art over the head with. But you can't help thinking about the way that the African art which is tied to the most profound cultural needs, is so much less schematic and diagrammatic than anything in the Whitney Biennial, which has reached a nadir of sanctimonious, self-congratulatory sloganeering. The Biennial, as has been widely advertised, is devoted this year to a narrow band of "political" art. Inevitably, much of it takes the form of installations and

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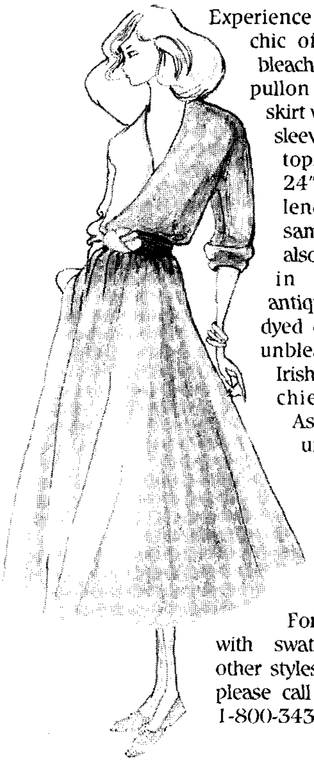
projects: oblique assemblages of objects—branding irons, replicas of Egyptian art, images borrowed from advertising—whose intended message can generally be figured out only by consulting a label. The points that are scored are either grindingly obvious, as in the reams of pictures that explore issues of gender by showing genitalia, or else bafflingly oblique, as in Allan Sekula's deadpan photographs of ports, which turn out to be bearing a message about, among other things, Israeli-Arab relations. There is even a piece in which you can pick up a red telephone, dial a 900 number, and get a lecture (surely intended ironically, you think at first, but apparently not) on the construction of racial hierarchies. The show combines the excitement of a seminar at the New School with the charm of a reëducation camp.

This is nothing new, of course. The debate about this Biennial rests on the question of whether the politicization of art is good or bad—a question that assumes that radical politics is the only kind of politics there is. But real politics, whatever else it may be, always has about it the tang of reality. Propaganda, on the other hand, which is what the Whitney is showing this year, is, in its nature, unreal. (That is why Soviet Communist imagery blends so easily, as Komar & Melamid have demonstrated, with surrealism.) The politicization of art, as it is being practiced at the Whitney, is a sign of the sterile disengagement of art from society, rather than the opposite. One of the things that drew people to the Matisse show at MOMA this fall was that he rearticulated for us, on a heroic scale, a set of values—the crucial importance of a realm of privacy, the claims of domestic pleasure free from interference—that are in some ways political but escape the abstract categories of ideology. One of the reasons that art, as a category, endures, even long after its old social functions have been usurped by the electronic media, is that we still have an appetite for things that find their voice in the peculiarities of the self rather than in the egoism of public diction. The "Secrecy" catalogue ends with a bit of artistic advice from a Dangme official: "Keep what you know not in your head but in your kneecap." In the Whitney Biennial this year, there are too many heads and not enough kneecaps. ♦



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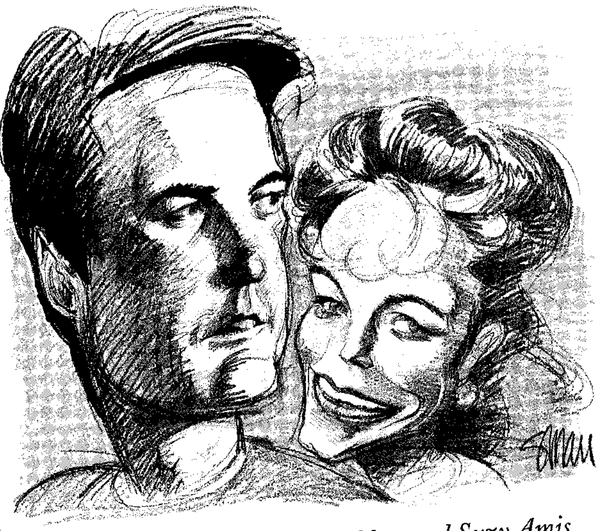
THE CURRENT CINEMA

TUNNEL VISION

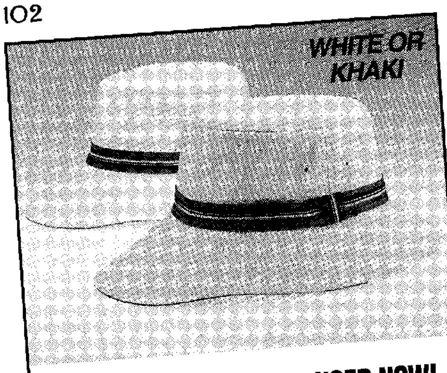
BY TERRENCE RAFFERTY

THE title of Leslie Harris's début feature, "Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.," is meant to be ironic. The movie's heroine, an inner-city teen-ager named Chantel (Ariyan Johnson), may look like a generic black girl to white subway riders, who view her and her friends with suspicion (if they notice them at all), but Harris—a black woman—wants to demonstrate that these kids can't be reduced to a stereotype. That's a worthy goal, and an attainable one: movies are very good at exploding abstractions and received ideas—simplistic notions about human behavior can't withstand the pressure of the concrete physical and emotional detail that movie cameras pick up with such extraordinary ease. For maybe the first three minutes of "Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.," you feel the thrill of anticipation, a sense that you're about to get an entirely fresh perspective on the sort of black experience that's usually seen through the distorting lens of hysterical local-news reports and lurid cop movies, or merely glimpsed from the windows of an elevated train. What's distinctive about the movie's opening sequence, a montage of documentary images of a grim-looking Brooklyn neighborhood, isn't so much the sights themselves as the rhythm of Harris's editing: the blasted-landscape slide show is cut to the hip-hop beat of a number by the female rappers Nikki D and Cee Asia, and there's a kind of truth in the music's twitchy, insistent rhythm. As party music for over-taxed urban nervous systems, it's weird hopeful; turning the fear, the hyper-alertness, and the confrontational bravado of street life into something you can dance to is a near-miraculous feat, and in this short opening scene Harris's visual style seems perfectly in synch with the rappers' tough, resourceful sensibility.



Down South: Kyle MacLachlan and Suzy Amis in "Rich in Love."

The refrain of Nikki D and Cee Asia's rap is "This is my life and it's just alright." But once the song is over and Harris begins to explore Chantel's life, everything feels all wrong. As a storyteller, Harris moves to the beat of the same old drummer which usually sets the tempo for earnest low-budget independent movies; she leads the heroine, and the audience, on a forced march from lesson to lesson, like a hall monitor herding students from first-period Social Studies to second-period History and then to third-period Hygiene. (The appropriate soundtrack music would be a medley of John Philip Sousa compositions performed by a military band.) Despite the picture's gritty look and truth-telling tone, Harris doesn't show much respect for the real, unique human qualities a girl from the projects might possess. Chantel is no more than a collection of traits meticulously arranged to advance the picture's didactic agenda. She isn't a person; she's a counter-stereotype. Harris builds her up and knocks her down according to the ideological need of the moment: sometimes Chantel is a positive-image icon, sometimes a cautionary figure. She



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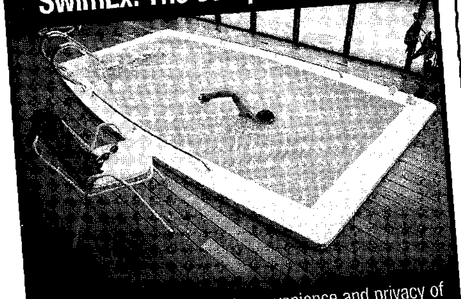

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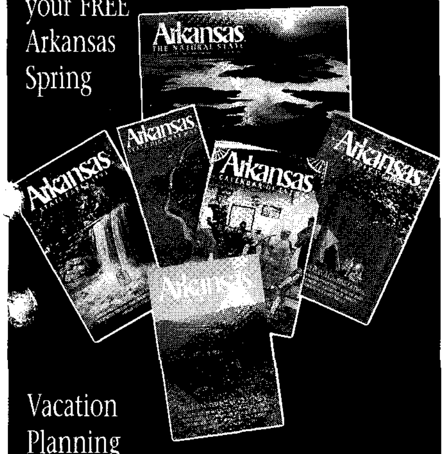

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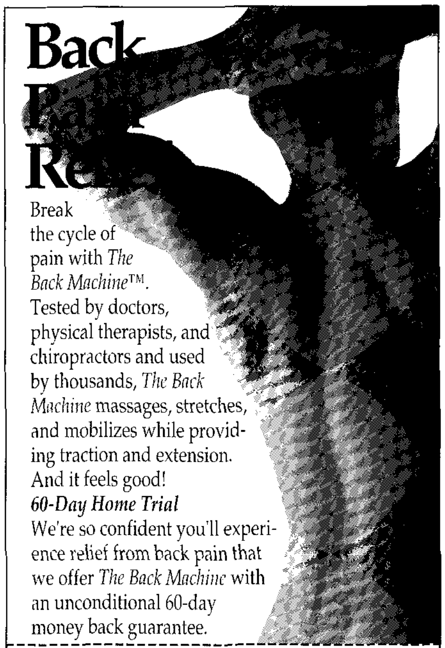
is always a statement of some sort. And Ariyan Johnson's performance, which has the look-at-me enthusiasm of an obnoxious musical-comedy juvenile, marks all the most obvious formulations with garish emphasis. Johnson's super-perky expressions and readings act on Harris's text like a student's yellow highlighter pen: the heroine's inauthenticity seems to jump right off the screen.

The idea of Chantel is that she's a girl who is thoroughly at home in her environment without being limited by it; she knows how to survive in the projects, but she also knows that there are other ways to live, and she has no doubts about her ability to master any situation she might find herself in. At school, she's accepted by her peers as a cool girl, conversant with the music, language, and fashions of the hip-hop culture, but she's also an academic whiz, aiming for college and med school; she's an inner-city supergirl, street-smart and book-smart. What's more, guys really go for her, and she enjoys the luxury of picking and choosing among her suitors, playing one off against another. We're meant to see her as courageous, high-spirited, and independent-minded, a kid who isn't afraid to talk back to anybody—black or white, male or female, teen-ager or grownup. As a finishing touch to this idealized portrait of black female strength, Harris also makes her heroine a dedicated and vocal Afro-centrist, who keeps a copy of "The Autobiography of Malcolm X" on her desk during history class.

It's never easy to believe in characters conceived as role models. Chantel is even tougher to buy than the usual paragon, because Harris has imagined her in only the most generalized way, and has filled in the crude outline with sloppy broad strokes. While keeping her polemical ends in sight, Harris consistently fudges the means: her eye for the nuances of behavior isn't sharp, and scene after scene is ruined by faulty observation—some nagging imprecision that undermines the characters' credibility. It makes no sense, for instance, to give Chantel the ambition to become a doctor. She rarely displays any concern for the welfare of other people, and the movie doesn't even show her studying biology or chemistry in school (which might demonstrate at least an intellectual interest in medicine). The fact that Chantel aspires to a professional career is important, but the filmmaker seems to have



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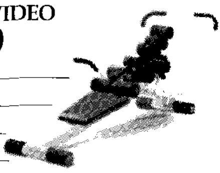

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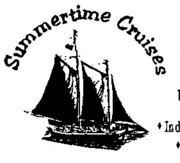

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picked her heroine's specific goal out of a hat. The movie would have less trouble persuading us that this brash, self-absorbed young woman dreamed of making her mark in law, politics, or the media.

Harris is in such a hurry to get through the lesson plan that she garbles messages that shouldn't be difficult to put across clearly and forcefully. Early on, she stages a confrontation between Chantel, who works after school at a fancy Upper West Side grocery, and a rude white customer. The patron, a fortyish upper-middle-class blond woman, is flagrantly racist: after Chantel fails to satisfy her unreasonable demands, she starts complaining about "these people." From beginning to end, the scene rings false. Affluent Manhattanites, who generally consider themselves liberal, almost never vent racist sentiments so unselfconsciously; if they want to convey disdain or condescension, they do so in subtler, slipperier ways—ways that won't make them feel like evil people or get them into fights. Instead of showing us the kind of excruciating, not quite stated tension that constitutes the more usual texture of urban racial hostility, "Just Another Girl on the I.R.T" gives us an all-out dissing contest—something Chantel can *win*. But then Harris blows the punch line. The verbal knockout Chantel delivers is lame: pointing to a bottle of virgin olive oil, she says to her blond tormentor, "But you don't know nothing about being no virgin, do you?" The woman recoils in shock, Chantel looks very pleased with herself, and viewers scratch their heads: great put-down line to a nun, maybe—but to a middle-aged married woman?

Soon after that comic gem, Harris treats us to a satiric history-class sequence, in which Chantel interrupts her white teacher's lecture on the Holocaust with an impatient objection: What about all the African-Americans who are suffering and dying right here, right now? Rather than use Chantel's question to draw parallels and initiate discussion—as all but the thickest of teachers would do—this piggy instructor tells her to shut up. She persists; he digs in. She pleads, "But, Mr. Weinberg—" You might at this point feel like walking out of the theatre, and if you do, all you'll miss is stuff you've seen dozens of times before; most of the remaining hour of "Just Another Girl on the I.R.T" is banal teen-pregnancy melodrama. Chantel's faceoff with the awful Mr. Weinberg is the scene that reveals this picture's individuality, sets it apart from the pack. Without the anti-Semitism, it would be just another preachy coming-of-age movie.

LUCILLE ODOM (Kathryn Erbe), the heroine of Bruce Beresford's "Rich in Love," is about the same age as Chantel, and she, too, is smart, strong-willed, and articulate. But Lucille is a white girl living in Charleston, South Carolina, so the crises that force her to grow up and figure out who she is happen at a rather leisurely pace—the po[illegible] gone-fishin' tempo that writers and filmmakers tend to drift into when they set up south of the Mason-Dixon Line. "Rich in Love" is an extremely faithful adaptation of a 1987 novel by Josephine Humphreys that's a near-perfect specimen of the current style of Southern fiction. Humphreys' book is gentle and quirky and just a little bit disapproving of contemporary values; it's all subtle, wry observations on the funny old world we live in, and every character is screwed-up but lovable. And the movie—which, like the novel, is narrated by the startlingly perceptive teen-age heroine—reproduces that tone exactly.

The filmmakers know the territory well: Beresford, the producers (Richard D. Zanuck and Lili Fini Zanuck), the screenwriter (Alfred Uhry), and the cinematographer (Peter James) worked together on "Driving Miss Daisy," and Beresford also directed the film version of "Crimes of the Heart," Beth Henley's comedy about a crazy (but sweet) Southern family. You couldn't say that the filmmakers were simply going through the motions in "Rich in Love"—their craftsmanship is scrupulous—but they might be a touch too comfortable in this warm-and-witty mode: there's something practiced about the movie's Southernness. "Rich in Love" seems too proud of the small patch of down-home wisdom it's staked out. At one point in the picture, the heroine's flamboyant older sister, Rae (Suzy Amis), chides her about her wardrobe, which is determinedly plain and functional; in Rae's view, Lucille's refusal to adorn herself is actually a kind of vanity. That might be a comment on the movie itself. Its modesty preens.

The hint of smugness in "Rich in Love" isn't entirely the filmmakers' fault; most of what's irritating about the movie comes straight from the novel. The story

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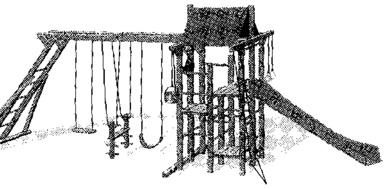

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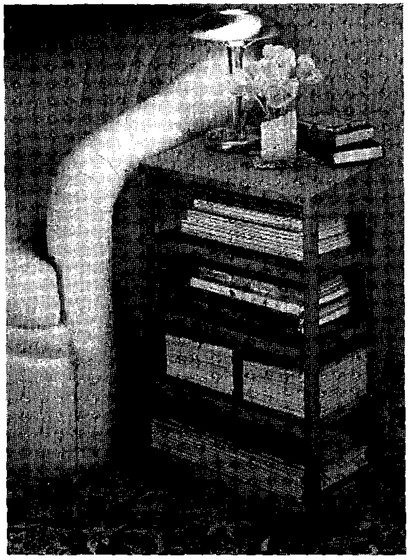
has to do with the confusions and emotional adjustments that result from the breakup of a middle-class family. One day, Lucille arrives home from school to discover that her mother, Helen (Jill Clayburgh), has bailed out of the household and gone to live on her own. Neither Lucille nor her father, Warren (Albert Finney), had picked up any warning signs, and they're both thrown for a loop. For the rest of the story, the Odoms work—slowly—on reconfiguring their lives. In the end, after nearly two hours of laughter and tears and tasteful sex and gorgeous South Carolina scenery, the Odoms spread out like the branches of a big oak, strong and separate but still attached to something common. Lucille heads off to college, which, in the rhetoric of growing-up stories, means she'll be fine. Everyone else is fine, too: Warren has a girlfriend, Vera (Piper Laurie), an earthy beautician; Rae, having weathered a bout of hysteria and despair, has had a baby, and has decided to stick with her laconic, ardent Northern husband, Billy (Kyle MacLachlan); Helen resurfaces, and is accepted by all as a special friend of the family, a kind of benign ghost.

The actors are an appealing group, and they do their best to keep the movie ambling along, from the standard-issue domestic crisis it begins with to its contentedly undramatic resolution. Amis's performance is the standout. She's very funny, but she also manages to suggest the deeper, more painful areas of experience which Southern art used to explore: at times, her squinty, bagged eyes and the creases framing her mouth evoke the prematurely aged look of the sharecropper women described by James Agee, and photographed by Walker Evans, in "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men." At the end of the movie, all the characters zoom off into their happy futures, but Rae is the only one who looks as if she'd had a past—as if she'd been somewhere. Everything else about the picture feels weightless, unrooted, and suspiciously ingratiating. "Rich in Love" is so bent on charming us that it refuses to grow up, to *become* much of anything: from the beginning, the movie affects the voice of an adorably precocious Southern child, and never abandons it. This style of wide-eyed Southernness was always sort of a parlor trick, and those who persist in it run the risk of seeming silly. The act just doesn't play anymore. ♦

Organized Reading



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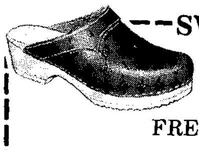

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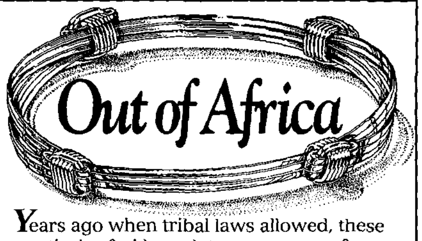

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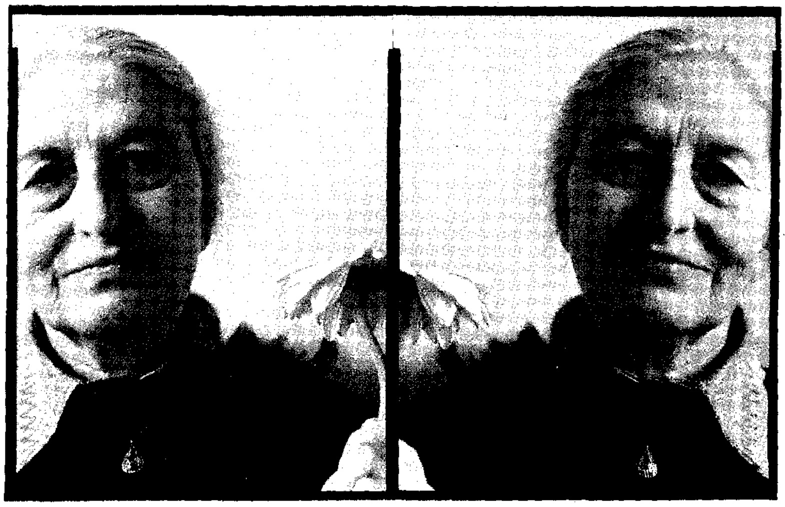
BOOKS

STRANGERS IN STRANGE LANDS

BY DEBORAH GARRISON

MANY people probably think of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala as an Indian screenwriter, the Academy Award winner who wrote the scripts for the recent movie adaptations of E. M. Forster's "Room with a View" and "Howards End." But Jhabvala is not Indian—her surname comes from her husband, C. S. H. Jhabvala, an Indian architect—and she has been around for a long time, not just as an associate of the producer-director team of Ismail Merchant and James Ivory, with whom she has been collaborating for some thirty years, but as a writer of her own stories and novels. Most of her books do take place in India, but Jhabvala was born in Germany, to Polish-Jewish parents, and went to England as a refugee at the age of twelve, in 1939. England, too, has a prominent place in the topography of her imagination, and in the eleven novels and five volumes of short stories she has written to date she has wandered back and forth across the globe, as though in a state of diaspora.

India and England—as actual countries and as cultural force fields—are the poles that Jhabvala's characters have most frequently travelled between. They are British officers in dubious command of remote, dusty regions; Oxford-educated Indian youths returned to Delhi with white flannels and Continental table manners; questing Englishwomen who devote themselves to gurus, or find a more concrete way to make love to the exotic otherness of India. Jhabvala's 1975 Booker Prize-winning novel, "Heat and Dust"—her best-known book, though not her best—tells the parallel stories of two such women: a restless Colonial wife seduced by a corrupt Indian prince, and her step-granddaughter, both of whom end up pregnant. These women, like many of Jhabvala's characters, are, to borrow the subtitle of one of her story collections, "seekers." They're looking for something, and chasing after it in the opposite direction from home.



Ruth Prawer Jhabvala finally comes home with her new novel, "Poet and Dancer."

Jhabvala, in her own roamings, has landed at last in America. She now lives mostly in New York, the adoptable home to anyone from anywhere, and the tragic pair of cousins in her new novel, "Poet and Dancer" (Doubleday; $19.95), are second-generation Americans, children of the children of German émigrés; their family, with three generations packed into its brownstone headquarters, is, in its own way, an old New York family. There are some Indian characters, too: in an arrangement that feels peculiar to this city and its atmosphere of ethnic cross-pollination, the transplanted Germans and transplanted Indians have gone into business together.

The foreword to "Poet and Dancer" works like one of Jhabvala's quietly ominous short stories. The author, whom we know so little about, takes us into her confidence and explains that she, too, was once a seeker, and that she became involved with "the psycho-evolutionary work" of a New York-style guru, Dr. Hugo Manarr. She didn't find the answers to her questions in his teachings, she says, but through her association with him she stumbled across—in fact, was handed—the blueprint for the chilling tale of Angel and Lara, the poet and the dancer, respectively, of the book's title. (She hasn't even changed their names, apparently.) Lara, a beguiling, manic-depressive blonde, was Dr. Manarr's daughter, and Angel was her homely, nearsighted first cousin, who grew up in the Manarr family brownstone with her German grandparents and her doting, divorced mother, Helena (Dr. Hugo's sister). It was Helena Manarr, an odd, "shifty" old woman with a massive black purse, who trapped Mrs. Jhabvala one day on her way out of Dr. Manarr's study:

> She came up to me and said, quite eagerly, "Hugo has told me you're a writer." She seemed to have been waiting for me, and we went down in the elevator together; she had put on a hat as large and black as her handbag. She said, "My daughter was a writer." Her face under the hat lit up. "She was a poet." When she spoke of her daughter, she took on a feverish vitality. She also exerted such a force of will that I felt compelled to stay and listen to her, even though I had an appointment to keep in the opposite direction. She said, "Would you like to see her poems?" She meant there and then. . . . She didn't even have to take my arm to make me follow her—it was I who had to take hers, for she was crossing the avenue against the Don't Walk sign.

Helena Manarr cultivated Mrs. Jhabvala, inviting her into the stifling, aggrieved world she inhabited—into her nasty, lairlike apartment, where she still kept Angel's childhood clothes, the petite velvet-collared coats and Mary Jane shoes. And when she died she left to Jhabvala the slender sheaf of adolescent poetry she had pulled out of her bag on the day they met. "Helena pursued me because I was a writer," Jhabvala explains, "and she wanted her daughter's life story written."

From the opening scene, the morning when a precocious Angel makes up her first poem, about a flower and a frog, her life does become a story—or, at least, it becomes a passage through a series of vividly imagined atmospheres. Here are Anna and Siegfried Manarr, the plump, operagoing grandparents, sitting at the lace-draped breakfast table, which is set—in European fashion, in the living room—with the blue-and-gold family china; here is the smell of hot rolls, of Siegfried's cologne and Anna's perfume. The characters are almost indistinguishable from their settings—in fact, the settings themselves are like characters, and vice versa. Angel's paternal grandmother, Mrs. Koenig, "towered above her—dark in her plum-colored crepe and her pinnacle of hair brushed into a silver pompadour," and "it was not only she who towered but her whole enormous apartment thickly populated with furniture, and chandeliers hanging down, mostly in dust shrouds." And then there are the cramped quarters of the Indian émigrés, the Aroras, who are in the import business with Helena: their living room, where a gold statue-god broods and a Kashmiri carpet too big for the floor curls up against the wall, expresses their guardedness, their sorrow, the shrunkenness of the life they lead in America because of some mysterious trouble they escaped from back in India.

It is in Anna and Siegfried's safe and charming salon that Angel, who is eight, meets her seven-year-old cousin Lara, who has been living abroad with Dr. Manarr's ex-wife. "Shall we play?" Lara coyly invites Angel, in front of the grownups. Angel recites her poetry aloud; Lara does a whirling, stomping little dance, which is the physical answer to Angel's babyish imagery. So begins the symbiotic marriage of the two, who complement each other perfectly: Angel the introvert, the watcher, the stolid protector; Lara the extrovert, the actor, the restless destroyer. That night, Lara invites Angel to play another self-serving game: she coaxes Angel into her bed and shows her where to put her hand. "Go on—like I'm doing," she insists. This childish fumbling is the only lovemaking that Angel will ever know; she adores Lara exclusively from that moment

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forward, though she doesn't see her again until fifteen years have passed and Lara returns to New York to live with Dr. Manarr. By that time, Lara is a reckless and indiscriminate lover of men—of whomever she fancies, often doormen and waiters she picks up. The centerpiece of the plot, the complication that sets off a series of shock waves in the family, is her affair with Angel's rich and commanding father, Peter.

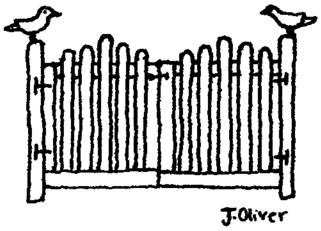
When Helena demands to know why Angel took it into her head to introduce Lara to Peter in the first place, Angel says, "Well, I don't know. Why not?" The fact is, Jhabvala isn't particularly good at character development and motivation. Maybe everything Lara does can be explained by her obvious imbalance, but it's hard to understand why a young woman as smart and careful as the adult Angel would move in with such a volatile nut case—which she does at her father's suggestion, in order to keep Lara out of trouble, and to administer the tranquillizers that keep her calm. (The tranquillizers are supplied by a guilt-ridden Dr. Manarr, who doesn't quite know what to do with his daughter. The negligence of this pair of fathers, while never overtly commented upon, is what enables Angel to get into such deep trouble; she couldn't have done it without them.)

Angel's attachment to Lara is most convincing in sexual terms. At one point, Angel almost walks in on Lara in bed with some guy—this time, one of the receptionists from the lobby of their building. Lara comes out of the bedroom laughing, and stands there naked and glowing in front of Angel, drinking milk straight from a carton. Angel's pain and desire are palpable, and so, for a moment, is her wish—her need—to give Lara everything she has, to protect her and keep her from harm. It's as elemental as her urge to please Lara in the childhood scenes. In a way, Jhabvala treats Angel and Lara as children throughout the book, and relies on the notion that sexual devotion itself is childish. It makes Angel behave stupidly.

Like many of Jhabvala's short stories, the book takes the shape of an hourglass, which must, with agonizing slowness (or is it agonizing swiftness?), run down: we know from the author's encounter with Helena in the foreword that Angel is going to die somehow. (And maybe that's why it doesn't matter very much in the end that Jhabvala can't delve deeper into Angel's motives; the real Angel's fate is incontrovertible.) Jhabvala has written before, with mixed results, about the kind of overweening love that can end only in death or some other destructive blow. In "Three Continents" (1987), her longest and most ambitious novel—in which a pair of American trust-fund kids are seduced by a criminal international spiritual movement—the love-and-death theme is exaggerated to such operatic proportions that the book falls flat. But in "Poet and Dancer" the necessity of death isn't operatic at all. It becomes instead something terrifyingly diminutive and intimate. Angel's world grows smaller and smaller as she devotes herself more and more exclusively to Lara: she limits her movements to the apartment they share and to the basement of the brownstone, where she keeps the books for Helena's business; and she stops writing poetry altogether. One afternoon, she goes up to her old study in the brownstone and finds that she has become a stranger to her former self; she cannot remember what the poetry she tried to write at the table in that upstairs room had been about: "What was it she had tried to say? Her subject had always been elusive . . . having nothing to do with what went on around her or the feelings attached to that, but with something surmised in the dying light and in the towering buildings reaching as high as they could and yet never high enough. . . . It was for that she had sought and never yet found the words and now never would because of having given up looking for them."

Angel once tried, in her writing, to express the limitations of her setting. And now Jhabvala has come along and done it for her. This is a black story; there is no hope in it, no mitigating humor, not one chink of light. And yet it is a story one avidly wants to read. Like Jhabvala, pulled by Angel's mother in the opposite direction from the one she meant to go in that day, we let ourselves be drawn into a wasted life we don't need to hear about, and there is some inexplicable pleasure in it. Perhaps it's simply that we know we will be safely on the outside when we finish.

JHABVALA has not always been such a tragic writer, but she has always been a shrewd observer. To read her is to be briefed by an invisible bystander—one who tells all, but scrupulously guards the secrets of her own heart, always reserving her opinion about what she's telling. (This may be why she's able to adapt other people's novels for the screen; even in her own work, she wants to stand aside and let the material speak directly to the audience.) Her earliest books—"Amrita" (1955), "The Nature of Passion" (1956), "Esmond in India" (1958)—are comedies of manners about both Westernized and traditional Indian families, their happiness and unhappiness, their ambivalence and pride about their country's newfound independence. They're Shakespearean-romance setups: sometimes the characters and their relationships are even laid out in a cast list at the start, and we know almost upon meeting them who will be married off to whom and who will be breaking up with whom by the finish. These are books propelled by a constant stream of clever dialogue, and by the Indian equivalent of drawing-room details: the women in the back room bemoaning their lot (the husband who doesn't listen to reason, the servants who are lazy and steal sugar), the patriarch reclining in the cushioned sitting room, having his legs massaged and worrying about his stubborn son, who won't take a job in the family business but wants to be an art critic. Whether a sari is of pure georgette or of cotton, whether a young man is "England-returned" or has been educated in his native country, whether people eat with knife and fork on china or with fingers out of brass bowls—these are the distinctions that matter to these people. If there's anything wrong with these essentially nimble, entertaining books, it's that they sometimes suffer from the same shortcomings as their characters: they're a little superficial.



Jhabvala's short stories are another matter. From her first collection, "Like Birds, Like Fishes" (1963), they are utterly different from the novels—not plotty and overdetermined but glittering and inevitable. Their everyday scenes often bring to light the small fissures—the first rumors of discontent in a young marriage, of rottenness in a love affair—that are the beginning of the end of something, which is usually more wretched (and more interesting) than the end itself. These stories betray hints of the kind of writer that Jhabvala would become—one obsessed with entrapment, with tragic conclusions—and of her gift for delivering character and habitat together, as one piece. (They remind you a little of V. S. Pritchett's stories, and even of Chekhov's.)

Over the years, Jhabvala's novels have become more like her stories: they've darkened, and their preoccupation with surface has slackened. But, for all their fluidity and poise, the novels have not generally achieved the magical ease that the stories have. This is in part because Jhabvala's Indian characters are universal types: the fussy mother-in-law, the happy-go-lucky son who will always do what pleases his parents, the bossy servant who has been with the family for years. Over the course of a whole novel, these figures, perfectly scaled for a short story, begin to verge on stereotypes: they're too eternal and unchanging to grow in interesting ways over the long stretch. John Updike, reviewing "Heat and Dust" in these pages, described Jhabvala's relationship to India as that of the "initiated outsider." And perhaps the overattenuated surface of her India novels betrays the strain of this role. An initiated outsider is nonetheless an eternal outsider—always the observer, never the participant. To some degree, Jhabvala has escaped this trap through a gradual movement westward over the years. More and more Westerners crop up in her India, and finally—starting with the adventurous "In Search of Love and Beauty" (1983)—she concentrates on

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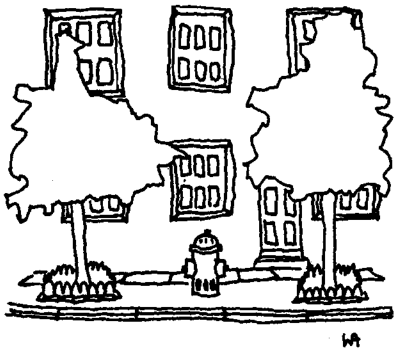
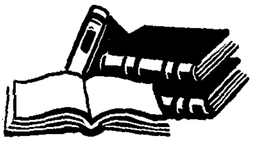
Westerners at home in the West. This thirty-year migration—it's as though Jhabvala were fulfilling her manifest destiny—has been a kind of a journey to the interior. In the introduction to her selected stories, "Out of India" (1986), she explains how living in an alien country has driven her literally inward:

> Sometimes, when I think of my life, it seems to have contracted to this one point and to be concentrated in this one room, and it is always a very hot, very long afternoon when the air-conditioner has failed. I cannot describe the *oppression* of such afternoons. It is a physical oppression—heat pressing down on me and pressing in the walls and the ceiling and congealing together with time that has stood still and will never move again. And it is not only those two—heat and time—that are laying their weight on me but behind them, or held within them, there is something more, which I can only describe as the whole of India. This is hyperbole, but I need hyperbole to express my feelings about those countless afternoons spent over what now seem to me countless years in a country for which I was not born.

Yet Jhabvala evokes her innermost feelings in terms of something outside herself—the room she is sitting in, and then the larger landscape of India. This is the paradox and the oddity of her work: even the interior is understood in terms of the exterior. Her gift for atmosphere is also her greatest limitation; the depths of her characters' souls are seen almost the way the gardens and furniture and jewelry are seen—meticulously, but from the outside. It's as though Jhabvala, having lived so many years as a stranger in a strange land, had developed the habit of the spy, the self-effacing watcher, and were doomed forever to remain one. Jhabvala's New York—or, at least, the New York of "Poet and Dancer"—is not so different from Jhabvala's India. It's a foreign place, warily observed. But "Poet and Dancer" is one of Jhabvala's best books, in part because she is an active presence. In this case, outsiderhood was a prerequisite to involvement with the story: Jhabvala's role as observer was organic to its conception. Throughout the book, the introduction lingers: Jhabvala's encounter with Helena, which brought the story to life, becomes an integral part of it, and so does Jhabvala's characterization of herself, her cool, slightly revealing, slightly self-admonishing first person.



Jhabvala has always written about young people. She is in her sixties now, but she is still interested in people in their twenties: newlyweds and students and confused young adults like Angel and Lara populate her last few books as well as her earliest efforts. But, notwithstanding the wonderful passage about Angel's youth in "Poet and Dancer," Jhabvala has rarely written about childhood. And, unlike so many writers, she has never written about her own childhood—at least, not directly. There are German émigrés scattered through her books, but they are older people. Nowhere is there a girl at the brink of adolescence, arriving in England before the war. Of course, it's a story that has been told many times. Growing up Jewish, I was given countless books about children who got out (and children who didn't), and those train journeys, those arrivals at Swiss *pensions*, are still vivid to me. The relief at seeing the children land in a safe haven was always combined with a sinking feeling, the knowledge that they would never go back home, not ever. In "Poet and Dancer," much is made of where home is—of Angel leaving her mother behind in the brownstone where a portrait of Anna and Siegfried hangs just above the couch on which they used to sit. The hauntingly precise description of that sun-filled, cozy, but somehow sad room reminds me of the German word *gemütlich* and the way it can be applied to a home—to mean "quaint," "comfortable," "familiar." Jhabvala's powerful attraction to all kinds of rooms in all kinds of countries, its ability to convey that nestlike hominess may come from her having been cast out—from her having to leave her first home behind and experience the alien freshness and terror of arriving in a new one. Perhaps, having journeyed into the childhood of a writer who didn't survive, she'll eventually make her way back into her own. ♦



BOOKS BRIEFLY NOTED

FICTION

The Children of Men
by P. D. James
(Knopf; $22)

P. D. JAMES'S latest novel is set in the future, but in a world without a future—in Great Britain in 2021, twenty-six years after the last child has been born anywhere. (For reasons that are never explained, in 1994 every man on earth became infertile.) Britain is a fascist state, and its dictator is a cousin of the protagonist, Theodore Faron, a middle-aged Oxford historian who teaches adult-education courses. The action starts when one of Faron's students introduces him to a small conspiratorial group and it appeals to him to ask his cousin to restore democracy. Although the concept of a world without children s a haunting horror, and James has hought of a host of details to make its wretchedness plausible, it's not clear why nfertility should cause fascism. There's a eminiscence of "A Clockwork Orange" n a gang called the Painted Faces, and plenty of Graham Greene in the portenous Christianity, which suggests that ames intended something more than ntertainment: allegory, sermon, scoldng—edification, in a word. But this work won't withstand very close scrutiny, nd it's just as well that the story concludes with a glorious chase, as scary and uspenseful as anything in Hitchcock.

Cry Me a River
by T. R. Pearson
(Holt; $22)

A POLICE officer has been shot to death n the woods outside a small town west of Roanoke, Virginia, and one of his colleagues who is also the unnamed narraor of this novel, begins a desultory earch for the killer. The story is a mysery only according to the loosest definiion; instead, the narrator unfurls long tretches of commentary on the comical ccentricities of his fellow-citizens. The readers will enjoy teasing out the ense in one grand loquacious sentence fter another; others will find this outhern game maddening. A number f very funny moments and sharply oberved scenes emerge from behind the hetorical waterfall, and the jocular yarn pinning is occasionally interrupted by ffecting reflections on rural loneliness nd the secrets that lead to sudden bloodletting. In the end, however, both the narrator, who himself becomes responsible for an unnecessary death, and his tale remain mannered and unsatisfying.

GENERAL

Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin
by Yegor Ligachev, translated from the Russian by Catherine A. Fitzpatrick, Michele A. Berdy, and Dobrochna Dyrcz-Freeman
(Pantheon; $27.50)

BEFORE all hell broke loose, Mikhail Gorbachev was still powerful enough to act as the controlling dramaturge of the Communist Party. In the Politburo, he allowed Alexander Yakovlev and Eduard Shevardnadze to play the role of house liberals, while Yegor Ligachev, an ideologue and disciplinarian from Siberia, was the avenging angel of the right-wing Party apparat. By 1989, Ligachev's opposition to truly radical reform of the Soviet system had gone from political legend to simple fact. He saw the rise of private property, competing political parties, and the independence of the republics as the definition of ruin, and said so. As with nearly all the current memoirs of former Soviet officials, Ligachev's main theme is betrayal. He believes that Gorbachev sold out to the supporters of a "radicalized" version of *perestroika* and, in the process, destroyed an empire and a precious ideology. Somehow, Ligachev manages to be engaging even as he tries to justify or deny some of his most underhanded attempts to foil his opponents. That he could be so wrong and yet so gripping in this memoir is his odd achievement.

Strom Thurmond and the Politics of Southern Change
by Nadine Cohodas
(Simon & Schuster; $27.50)

THIS exceptionally readable biography of the durable senator from South Carolina (Thurmond was elected to his seventh term in 1990) traces his effect on American history and history's effect on him. Born in 1902, Thurmond grew up and entered politics in a milieu in which racism was assumed rather than asserted, but after the Democratic National Convention adopted a civil-rights plank in its 1948 platform he fought for segregation as the Presidential nominee of the States' Rights Democrats, or Dixiecrats. In 1964, Thurmond became a Republican, and began the revival of the two-party system in the South. But, no matter how he tried, in whatever party he joined, he could not ultimately prevent Southern blacks from voting, and in 1971 he added a black man to his staff. Ever since, he has courted the black vote with the potent blend of courtesy and pork he once reserved for whites only. Cohodas gracefully assembles innumerable facts to convey the texture of Southern life and politics in this century.

Outlaw Cook
by John Thorne,
with Matt Lewis Thorne
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $25)

"THE genuinely interesting question about the food we eat," John Thorne says in this wonderful book, is "not where it comes from or who grows it or even which of it tastes the best, but why it wants to kill its father and sleep with its mother." There are chapters on meatballs, on mushrooms, on soda bread and garlic soup and pecan pie. Still, Thorne's question is not how can you wow your guests with your *aïgo bouïdo* but how food relates to our moral and psychological life—how we *live* with food. At times, his meditations are intense; reading him on bread is like reading Proust on love. Elsewhere, he cuts through mysteries in a stroke. (His first recipe for potato pancakes: take the skins left over from last night's baked potatoes, smash them down with your fist, stick them on the skillet.) He is keenly anti-snobbish. He doesn't make stock. He doesn't understand why cookbooks keep telling us to figure on three ounces of pasta per person when most of us eat twice that. And he has his say on, among others, Martha Stewart, the strawberry-wielding doyenne of upscale entertaining. In its psychological penetration, this is more a novel than a cookbook, but you get recipes, too. ♦

SHOUTS AND MURMURS

FRIEND OF THE BUILDING

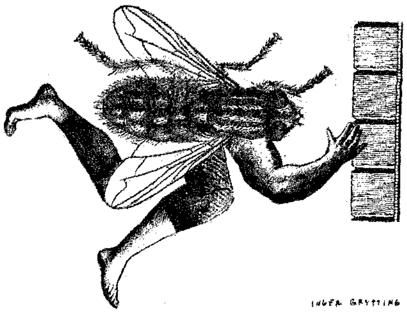
BY IAN FRAZIER

IN the days after the explosion at the World Trade Center, I thought about George Willig, a hero of mine. On May 26, 1977, George Willig climbed the World Trade Center using homemade hand-held clamping devices, which he inserted in the window-washing channels on the northeast corner of the South Tower. His three-and-a-half-hour climb from the ground to the roof stopped traffic, drew clouds of helicopters, and made him briefly famous. He was twenty-seven at the time and lived in Queens. Today, he lives, with his wife, in Woodland Hills, California, and is an independent real-estate appraiser. I called him on the phone.

"I was on vacation in Costa Rica when the explosion happened," he said. "I didn't read about it in the papers or see anything about it on TV. My wife called our answering machine, and there was a message from my mother-in-law saying there'd been a fire or a bomb or something at the World Trade Center. We got back on Monday, and I went out and got a Sunday *Times*, but I didn't get a chance to read it right away.

"People used to ask me about the World Trade Center all the *time*—refer to me as the Human Fly, and all that. But for a few years now I haven't talked about it much. Sometimes I'll remember the climb, and I'll ask myself, 'Did I really do that?' I'm a pretty modest person, and sometimes I find it amazing that I really did. I thought about making the climb for a year or more beforehand. I'm interested in research and development, and I saw it more as an engineering challenge. I worked out the details carefully, and I knew my plan was very secure and solid and I couldn't fall down. I picked that particular corner because I wanted a good view and I wanted New York to have a good view of me. I kept going back to the building and working out all the problems. I'd stop and say, 'What, am I crazy? Have I lost it?' And I'd rationalize that I wasn't going to do it, and then suddenly I'd think about it again and get this adrenaline rush. Now it seems like it was like falling in love—an inescapable attraction to someone or some thing. Like destiny.

"Looking around doesn't bother me when I climb, and I'm not afraid to look down. I started the climb about six-thirty in the morning, and I was pretty far up by rush hour. I took as many mental snapshots as I could. I could see cars stopped on the highway along the river, and quite a crowd below, and I saw the Fire Department, or somebody, blow up an air bag. It looked like the head of a pin—it wouldn't have been much use if I'd needed it.



"When I got to the top, I was arrested, of course, and the city said they were going to fine me a quarter of a million dollars. They ended up fining me a dollar and ten cents—a penny a floor. I went on a lot of talk shows and was in newspapers and on the radio, and I came out with a book. For a while there, I felt like I was a dollar sign with legs. Newspaper reporters who were writing about me found out that my mother had been trapped in the Empire State Building back in 1945, when the B-25 crashed into it. She was working for the Catholic War Relief Services, on the seventy-eighth floor, when the plane hit a floor above or below, and she saw a lot of smoke and flames, and her boss burned up. He came running to her on fire and told her to save herself, and she was sure she was dead, so she took off her school ring and a ruby friendship ring my dad had given her before he went overseas and she threw them out the window. She said she thought it would be a shame to let them burn up, and she wanted someone else to have them. I remembered her telling me about that when I was five or six, but I hadn't thought much about it since. Newspapers started referring to my 'edifice complex.' I wouldn't have said it had anything to do with my climb, but now I think it's a pretty incredible coincidence.

"I haven't been back to New York in a couple of years. My wife and I will probably go this summer. As part of a publicity gimmick I did for the World Trade Center back in '77, the guy who ran the *observation deck* gave me a lifetime pass so I could go up there for free whenever I wanted. Last time I was in New York, I tried to use it, and it turned out it had expired. It wasn't a lifetime pass—it was only good for one year. The guy at the elevator looked at it, and he stopped me. I told him, 'I climbed this building.' He said, 'Oh, O.K., you can go up.' I identify with the building. When I heard about the explosion, I thought of doing something—I don't know, writing a letter to the building, to the Port Authority or somebody, expressing my concern and apologies. It was like when a friend gets hurt." ♦

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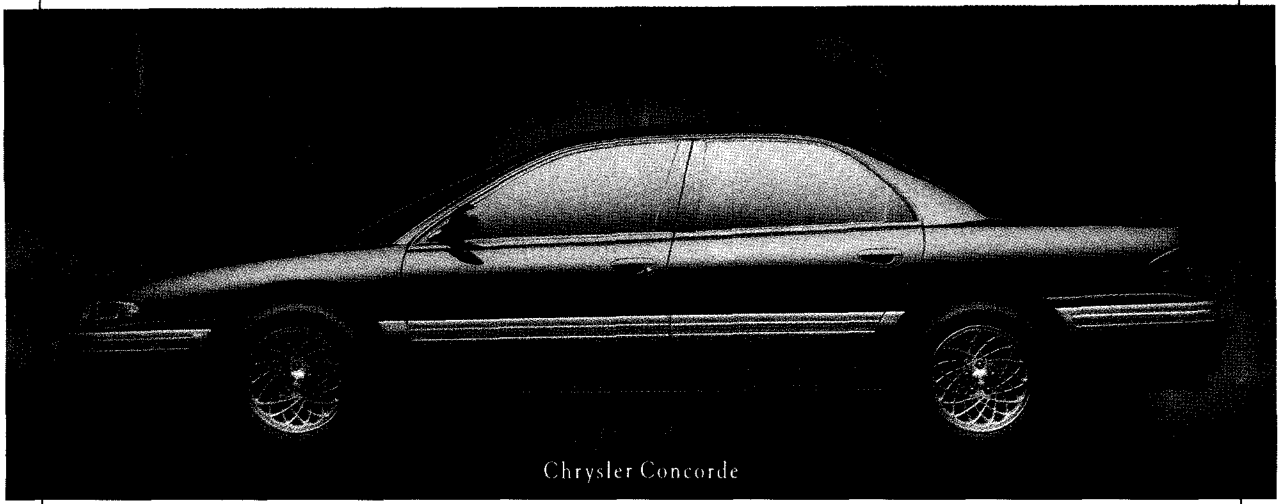

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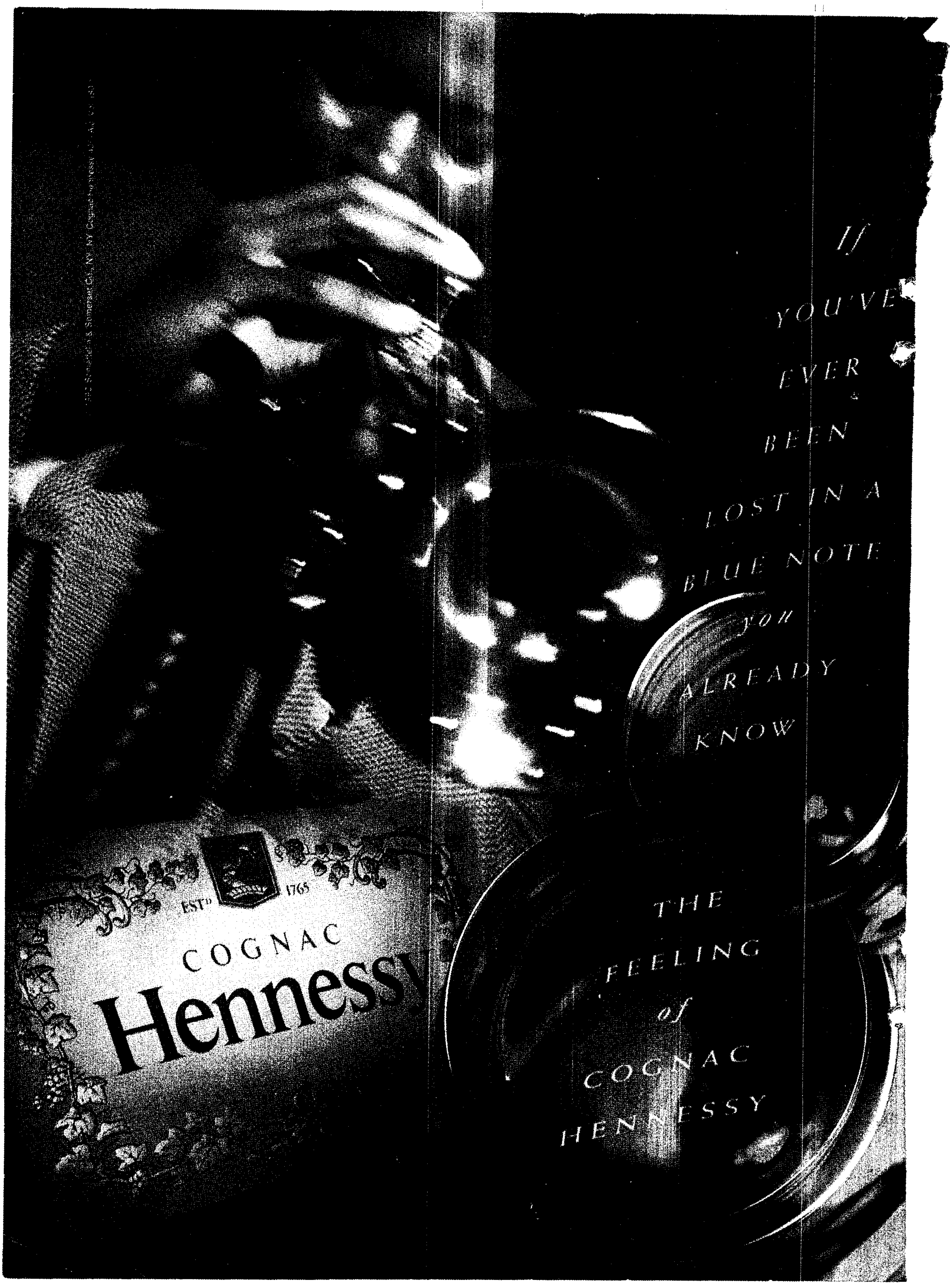
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